ARGOSY
10¢

RICHARD H. WATKINS • DONALD BARR CHIDSEY • ROBERT E. PINKERTON

ARGOSY

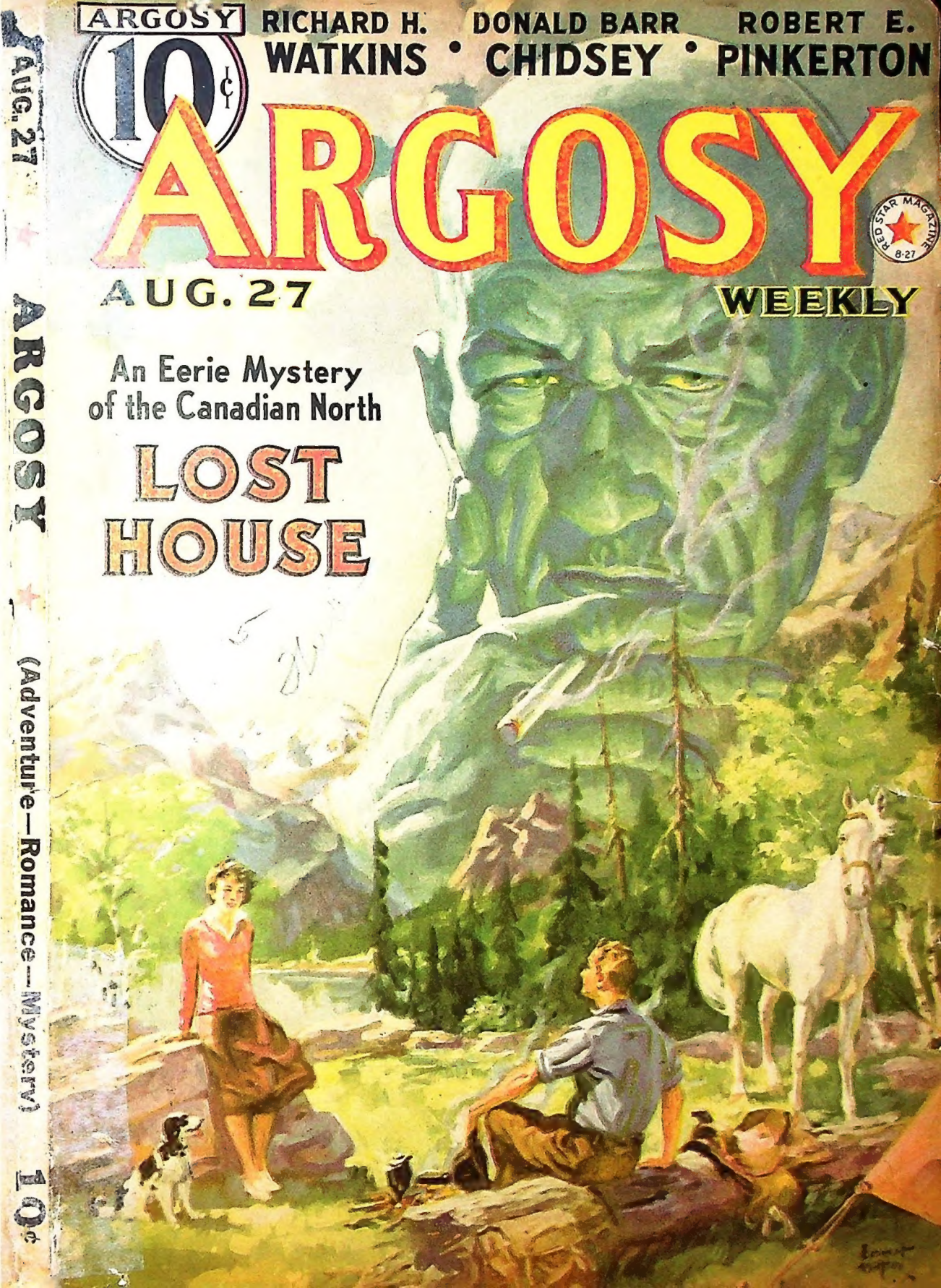
RED STAR MAGAZINE 8-27

AUG. 27

WEEKLY

An Eerie Mystery of the Canadian North

LOST HOUSE



AUG. 27 ARGOSY (Adventure—Romance—Mystery) 10¢

NO GREATER OPPORTUNITY THAN THIS

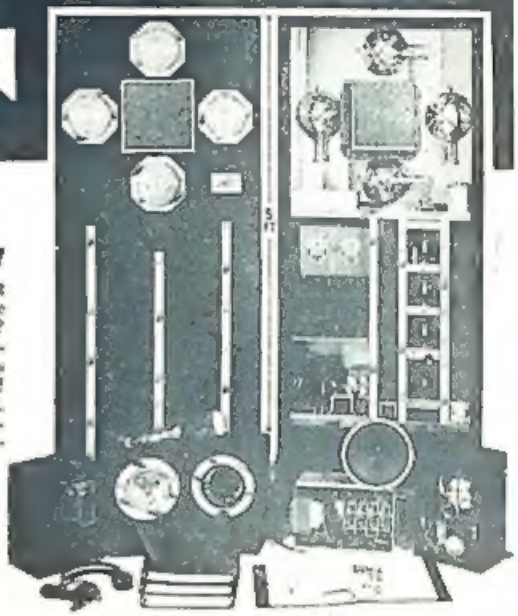
The GROUND FLOOR of TELEVISION

Every student receives this giant television cathode ray tube as part of his equipment.

TRAINED TELEVISION MEN WILL BE NEEDED *SOON!*

Already Commercial in England!

Television engineering will be the next high salaried profession. Will you be ready to cash in with this new industry? Leaders of radio recognized their opportunity some fifteen years ago, and they as engineers have since earned millions! Now the future of television is assured. Are you going to make it *your* opportunity for success? Trained men will make from $2,500 to $20,000 per year.



THE AMERICAN TELEVISION INSTITUTE

was established in 1935, to provide skilled men for television development in the United States. A. T. I. was founded by U. A. Sanabria, internationally famous inventor of the interlaced scanning system, now universally used. The Institute possesses one of the best equipped television experimental laboratories in the world, and it is here that students complete their courses under the personal supervision of Mr. Sanabria.

COMPLETE PROFESSIONAL TELEVISION EQUIPMENT INCLUDED · · · AT NO EXTRA COST

A. T. I. TELEVISION TRAINING

qualifies you during the first few months to take your RADIO TELEPHONE FIRST CLASS GOVERNMENT LICENSE EXAMINATION and get into a good paying job in the radio field while completing your television instruction. Many of our graduates are successful in radio and sound motion pictures.

M. B. Foster of Prairie Du Chien, Wis., writes: "As a graduate of the class of 1926, I can highly recommend A. T. I. training with practical equipment. Since graduating, I am a technician with the Ampro Motion Picture Corp., making a good salary. I feel secure in knowing that I am able to do nearly anything in sound motion pictures or radio now, and that I am ready for television."

E. D. Carter of Bethany, Ohio, writes: "I spent two years in college and have investigated other training in radio and the allied arts, and I have yet to find anything nearly so comprehensive as the A. T. I. training in television, which includes all any practical man needs to know about radio. I have earned an average of $2,500 per year since studying with Mr. Sanabria during television and telephone work."

★ Bulletin! ★

. . . . The National Resources Committee reported to President Roosevelt that the most important development work in television was completed, and that only the commercial arrangements remain to be made to provide national television service.

This means trained men must be ready.

AN UNPARALLELED VALUE AMAZING QUALITY

Equipment You Receive From American Television Institute

Is not small, ordinary instruction equipment, but a full sized professional television laboratory used for public exhibitions with a steel rack and panels nearly six feet high, two feet wide and eight inches deep mounted on rubber tired casters; R.C.A. amplifier and modulator tubes throughout with A.T.I.'s giant photo-electric cells and 7" x 21" cathode ray receiving tube, together with all other parts to make a complete television transmitter and receiver worth a thousand dollars to one taking this training. All of this is included with the A.T.I. course and is yours to keep. It is all amazingly low in price and on terms arranged to suit you. It costs you nothing to thoroughly investigate this opportunity. You cannot afford to pass it up if you want to get in to television. *Send Coupon Now.*

A. T. I. TRAINING WITH COMPLETE EQUIPMENT IS AVAILABLE ON AMAZINGLY LOW EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS

THIS MAY MEAN YOUR FUTURE IN TELEVISION — MAIL COUPON *Today!*

AMERICAN TELEVISION INSTITUTE
433 E. Erie St., Dept. MS-8, Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: Please send me your free book, and first four lessons, with which I would like to be tested. It is understood that all this is free. No obligation.

Name ..... Age.....

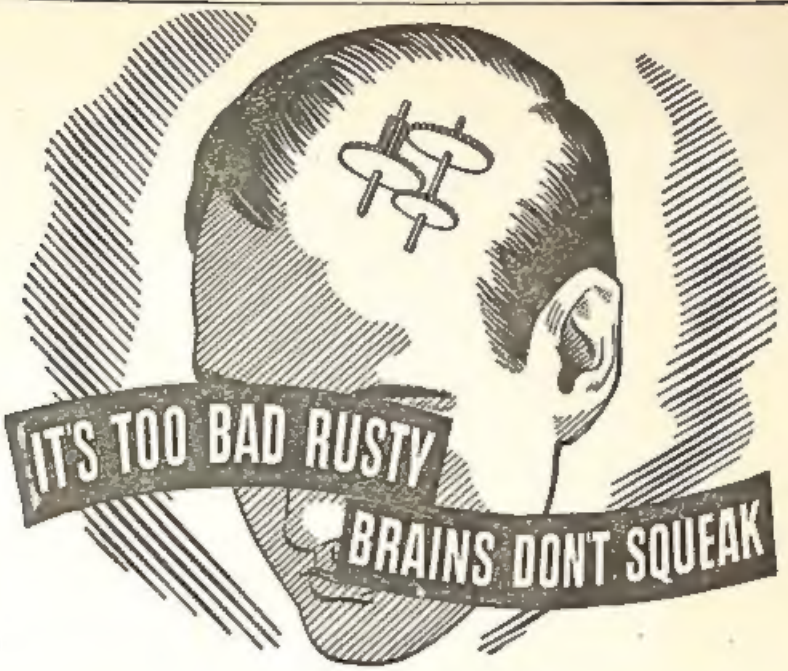
Street .....

City ..... State.....

4 *Lessons* FREE!

The Man of Ability Will Succeed

We accept only applicants who can pass the examinations on the first four lessons. We will actually send four lessons without cost or obligation, so you may determine how A. T. I. training will benefit you, and equip you for a future in radio and television. Clip coupon right now, and mail it to us without delay!



IF RUSTY BRAINS did squeak, no one would have to warn you against trying to get ahead in a modern world with antiquated training! Keeping your brain modern is just as important as keeping plant equipment modern. The best way to keep your brain up to date is to keep your training up to date. The business of modernizing men's training is the business of the International Correspondence Schools. All over the world men testify to the effectiveness of I. C. S. training — and if you are stuck on a job, if your pay envelope is too thin, this coupon can be the first step toward changing the course of your entire life.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2212-F, SCRANTON, PENNA.

★ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X: ★

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Building Estimating
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Management of Inventions
☐ Electrical Engineer
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Boilermaker
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work ☐ Radio
☐ Mechanical Engineering
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker
☐ Patternmaker
☐ Diesel Engines
☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Auto Technician
☐ Auto Electrical Technician
☐ Commercial Refrigeration
☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation
☐ Air Conditioning and Cooling
☐ Steam Engineer
☐ Steam Electric Engineer
☐ Marine Engineer
☐ R. R. Locomotives
☐ R. R. Section Foreman
☐ Air Brakes ☐ R. R. Signalman
☐ Highway Engineering
☐ Civil Engineering
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Bridge Engineer
☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Coal Mining
☐ Mine Foreman ☐ Fire Bosses
☐ Navigation
☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Agriculture
☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Poultry Farming

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Accountancy
☐ Cost Accountant
☐ C. P. Accountant
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Secretarial Work
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Service Station Salesmanship
☐ First Year College Subjects
☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ College Preparatory
☐ Illustrating
☐ Cartooning
☐ Lettering Show Cards ☐ Signs

DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES

☐ Home Dressmaking
☐ Professional Dressmaking and Designing
☐ Advanced Dressmaking
☐ Foods and Cookery
☐ Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering

Name.....*Age*.....*Address*.....

City.....*State*.....*Present Position*.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

Volume 284 CONTENTS FOR AUGUST 27, 1938 Number 2

Pirates of Foggy Reef—*Complete Novelet*....Robert E. Pinkerton 4
Gray Alaskan waters, bleak Alaskan sky, and midnight marauders to fight

Lost House—*First of six parts*.....Frances Shelley Wees 24
Like a rock in the wilderness it stood—the house that murder loved

I'll Be Glad When You're Dead—*Short Story*.....Howard Rigsby 42
The fabulous tale of a restless cadaver with a job to do

Midas of the Mountains—*Second of three*...Donald Barr Chidsey 49
On a throne of gold sits the jungle spider and spins his cunning web

Men of Daring—*True Story in Pictures*.....Stookie Allen 64
Johnson and Graenre—Aerial Acrobats

Refugee Land—*Complete Novelet*.....C. F. Kearns 66
Handsled Burke travels a vicious Arctic circle with the gallows at its end

Off Soundings—*Short Story*.....Richard Howells Watkins 82
A secret that everyone knew but the Indian sign on a deep-sea diver

Cut Loose Your Wolf—*Fouth of six parts*.....Bennett Foster 95
It's roundup day in Franklin, for Larry Blue's worst enemies

The Horse Trader—*Short Story*.....John Randolph Phillips 116
Be clever, Cast Franklin, and let who will be good

Allergy's Child.....Crosson Howard 81
What, No Joneses?.....Augustus Harden 94
Man Is But Flesh.....Eduard H. Ohlson 115
Argonotes 127
Looking Ahead! 126

Cover by Emmett Watson

Illustrating Lost House

This magazine is on sale every Tuesday

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

THE CONTINENTAL PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS, LTD.
3 La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., 4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE
111 Rue Réaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1938, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies 10 cents. By the year $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; Canada, $5.00; Other countries, $7.00. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright and must not be reprinted without the publisher's permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain.
Printed in U. S. A.

Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unacceptable. The publishers can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

Train for a Well-Paid Hotel Position in 4 months

COME to WASHINGTON

Good positions for trained men and women in hotel, club, restaurant and institutional field. Previous experience proved unnecessary. Qualify in FOUR MONTHS—learn on real hotel equipment, under expert instructors. National Placement Service FREE of extra charge. New Day Classes start Sept., Oct., Jan., Feb. Catalog FREE!

LEWIS HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOLS
Division RSP-7134 Washington, D. C.

BE A PASSENGER Traffic Inspector

A Good, Well-Paid Job for YOU!

Railway and Bus Lines constantly ask for our trained graduates. Men—18 to 50—make good and advance quickly with experience. Short, home-study course qualifies you and upon completion we place you at up to $135 per month, plus expenses to start, or refund tuition. Write for the interesting story of Traffic Inspection. STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, Div. 5008, Buffalo, N. Y.

Used HOME-STUDY COURSES BOUGHT and SOLD

SENSATIONAL BARGAINS FOR YOU !!

Educational books and used correspondence courses of every kind bought, sold, rented, exchanged. Old established concern guarantees 100 per cent satisfaction on every transaction. Write for FREE illustrated catalogue and full details. Send no money. Mail penny postcard today! NELSON-HALL COMPANY, 759 Manhattan Bldg., CHICAGO

High School Course at Home

Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work — prepares you for entrance to college. Standard H. S. texts supplied — Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. HC30, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

New Catalog

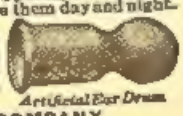
—of Bargains in Military, Outdoor and Sport Goods. Clothes, Shoes, Boots, Blankets, Tents, Firearms, Boy Scout Supplies, etc. Send 10¢ for copy to be redeemed on first order.

A AND N SUPPLY CO.
Formerly Army & Navy Supply Co.
4782 Lester St., Richmond, Va.
EST. 1868

NO JOKE TO BE DEAF

—Every deaf person knows that—

Mr. Way made himself hear his watch tick after being deaf for twenty-five years, with his Artificial Ear Drums. He wore them day and night. They stopped his head noises. They are invisible and comfortable, no wires or batteries. Write for TRUE STORY. Also booklet on Deafness.



Artificial Ear Drum

THE WAY COMPANY
725 McKerchey Bldg. Detroit, Michigan

MEN

Get free booklet about Zo-ak Tablets—the formula of well-known New York physician created especially for men. Zo-ak contains quick-acting vegetable stimulants plus essential vitamin concentrates in adequate amounts to build up health and strength. Ask for Zo-ak (blue box) at any good druggist, and write for free booklet by registered physician. Sent in sealed envelope by Zo-ak Company, 56B West 45 St., Dept. A, New York.

YOU CAN LEARN TO DRAW

AT HOME—IN YOUR SPARE TIME

A few pleasant hours a week of study and drawing during your term under our instruction should start you on the road to earning money in the profitable field of Art.

COMMERCIAL ART ILLUSTRATING CARTOONING

Many of our most successful graduates never studied Art before enrolling with W. S. A. YOU have the same opportunity of becoming an Artist. Since 1914 our proven, practical method has been training men and women for successful Art Careers. Write today for FREE illustrated book—"Art for Pleasure and Profit". State age.

STUDIO 845 E. WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART
1115-15th ST. N. W. WASHINGTON, D. C.

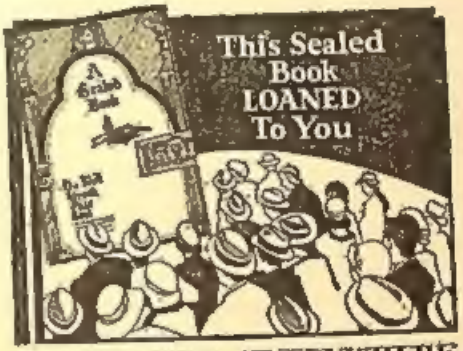
LAW STUDY AT HOME

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. They command respect. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. conferred. Successful graduates in every section of the United States. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 64-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.

LASALLE EXTENSION, Dept. 858-L Chicago



THOUSANDS EVERYWHERE ACCLAIM THIS

New Psychology Of Life!

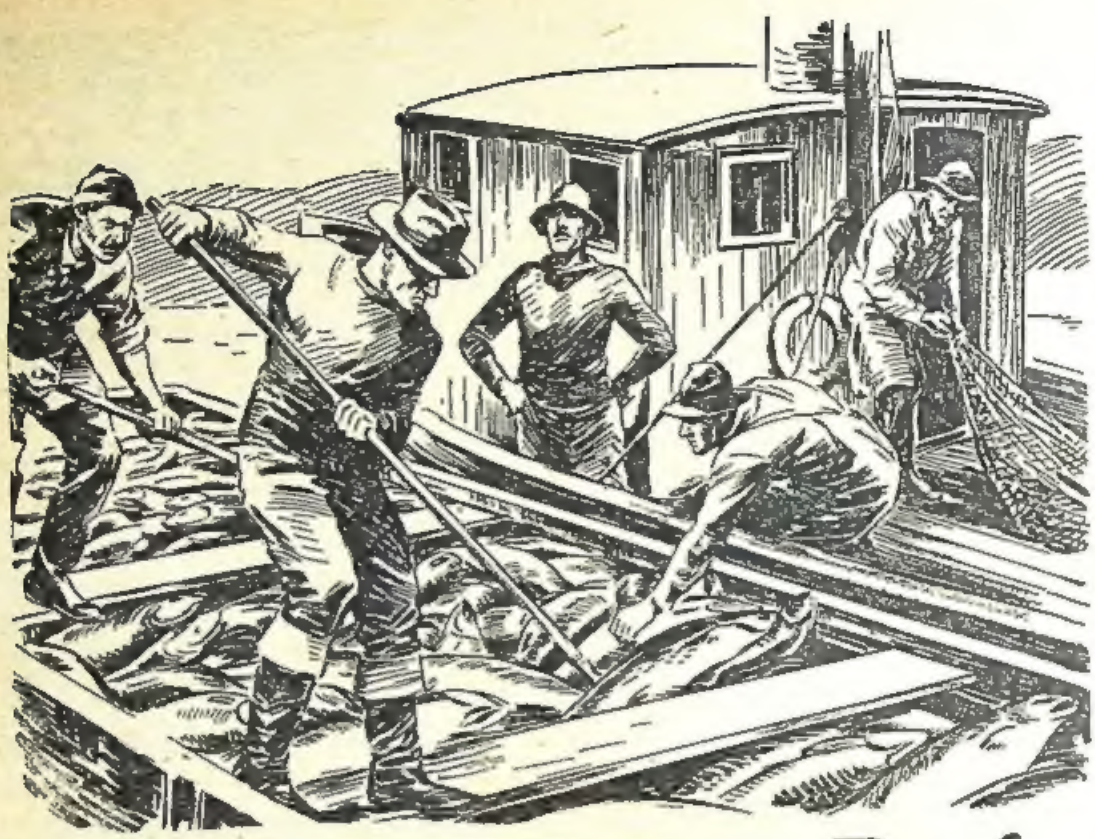
Have you unrealized hopes? Are the better things of life always just beyond your reach?

Times have changed—but have you? Adopt a new psychology of life and MASTER YOUR PROBLEMS. It takes no greater mental effort to achieve results when you know how.

Let the Rosicrucians show you how, by the use of simple laws, you can apply the powers of your mind to bring about startling changes in your life. If you are sincere in your desire, write for the free Sealed Book. It will point out how you may obtain this most helpful information. Address: Scribe E.C.Y.

The Rosicrucians
-AMORC-
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA.

Perpetuating the Ancient Rosicrucian Secret Teachings



Pirates of Foggy Reef

By ROBERT E. PINKERTON

Author of "Liege Lord," "Monument at Stovepipe," etc.

It was the biggest catch of the year —but before it could be brought in there was a toll of battle and disaster to pay. A novelet of the Northern waters

I

SUE LLOYD was asleep when they carried her father into the house at the Kogish Cove cannery, but like a true salmon-packer she was alert the moment she wakened.

"Your father—leg's broke," one of the men said. "Maybe his head."

The staring white face terrified Sue but she did not show it as she asked what had happened.

"Fell off the end of the platform," was the answer. "Lay in the rain. He's out cold."

They got Carter Lloyd to bed. Sue was tall and she moved swiftly and competently. Even her hair was not disheveled. The blond curls seemed to pull themselves into place. The deep blue of her eyes was without panic.

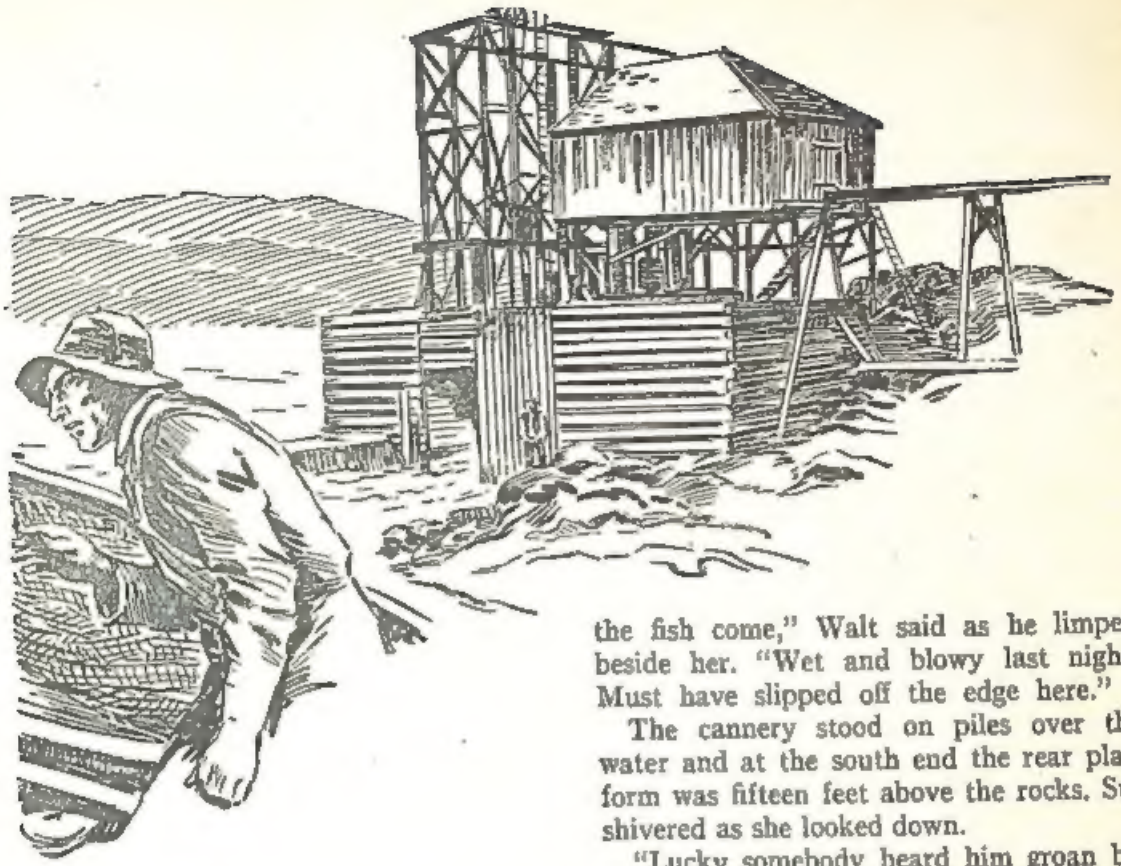
But when she was alone with her father she turned to him in despair, only to find him watching her.

"Didn't fall," he whispered. "Knocked down."

"But who would do that?" she exclaimed.

"Keep it quiet. Probably a fish pirate. Slender, dark."

"A fish pirate wouldn't dare."



But she did not convince even herself, for her father owned the most famous fish-trap in Southeastern Alaska, and to raid it was the ambition of every salmon thief on the coast.

"You'll have to take over," Carter Lloyd said. "Let 'em think you don't suspect. Call on Homer if you have trouble."

He said it with great effort. He had been exposed to cold rain for hours and he was badly hurt.

Sue cared for him as best she could. She dressed, issued orders. The scout boat was already on its way down the arm to the Knight cannery with wireless messages. The usual work of the day was gotten under way. The salmon run was due at any time and there could be no pause when the blue-backed swarms were heading in from the open sea.

But as soon as she could spare a moment Sue went with Walt Maguire, cannery foreman, to where Carter Lloyd had been found.

"He wanders around at all hours when the fish come," Walt said as he limped beside her. "Wet and blowy last night. Must have slipped off the edge here."

The cannery stood on piles over the water and at the south end the rear platform was fifteen feet above the rocks. Sue shivered as she looked down.

"Lucky somebody heard him groan before the tide came in," Walt said. "He'll probably get pneumonia as it is."

Sue did not comment. The wet planks told nothing. She looked at an electric light at the corner of the building.

"That light was on," Walt said. "Carter must have stumbled."

They went back. Sue had only a vision of what might have happened, of a dark slender man hiding when her father passed. The light would throw a deep shadow around the corner.

The swift scout boat came back, and a fast craft from the Knight cannery a mile down the shore. Homer Knight found Sue in the Carter dwelling.

SHE felt relief as soon as he entered. He was square and solid, and voice and eyes added to the impression of strength and competence. For a moment he held her in his arms. "Carter will pull through," he said. "And I didn't send the message for a doctor."

"But he must have one!" Sue protested.

"We can land him in Ketchikan as soon as a doctor could get here. He'll have far better care in a hosiptal and you'll feel a lot better there."

"But I can't leave."

"Walt Maguire has been with your father since he cooked his first can. Joe Holt almost as long."

"I will keep in touch by wireless. But Homer! Our tenders are both gone."

"My big one is coming. Carter will be in the hospital by one o'clock. You, too."

"I can't," Sue said. "Dad didn't fall. He was knocked off the platform by someone."

"Nonsense! Who would do that?"

"I've just been out there. No tracks, of course, no signs of a struggle, but—"

Homer Knight slipped a protecting arm about the girl.

"Hang on to yourself," he soothed. "Who would hurt Carter Lloyd? You're upset and—here's the boat."

The big Knight tender drew up at the float and soon the injured man was aboard. But Sue refused to go.

"If anything happens, you'll never forgive yourself," Homer urged.

"He wouldn't want me to leave the cannery," Sue answered. "I'll send the scout boat over this afternoon for any reports."

"It doesn't seem right, having him go off alone like this."

"You're a dear, Homer."

"And you're always stubborn. Don't worry about messages. I'll bring anything soon's it comes."

Sue Lloyd was busy in the office after her father was taken away. Several Indian purse-seiners were in and their skippers wanted advances. Some of the Filipino cannery workers had grievances they wished to discuss at length. Even the cannery itself needed attention, for Walt Maguire was getting old, his sciatica bothered him and he was inclined to dodge the responsibility he had been proud to carry for so long.

In the middle of the forenoon Sue looked up from her desk to find a young man with a blue seaman's cap in his hand.

"Too bad about your father," he said. "Hope everything comes out all right."

Sue had never seen him, but there was something so friendly and sincere in his sympathy she smiled.

"Thank you," the girl said.

"Pretty tough, happening just at the start of the run. But maybe he'll be back in a few days."

"Dad has a broken leg," Sue answered. "I'll have to run things."

"You!"

"Why not? I've been with Dad every season for ten years."

He grinned then, a crooked, understanding grin that had admiration in it, too. She noticed for the first time what a lean, friendly face the grin disclosed beneath a mop of black hair; noticed the wide shoulders and long, lithe body.

"You look as if you could run things," he said. "Don't need a skipper?"

"We have two tenders and they're both well manned."

"But I'd like to work for you."

Both heard the exhaust of a Diesel engine and looked out the window. The Kogish cannery's largest tender, the *Susan Lloyd*, was mooring at the float. Beyond it a smaller craft, the *Kogish*, was creeping in. It barely missed the *Susan Lloyd*, then set the float to creaking with its impact.

"Well manned," the stranger said.

IT WAS a lubber's landing and Sue flushed as she went out. Captain Joe Holt, skipper of the *Susan Lloyd*, was coming up the ramp.

"Why didn't you folks answer my wireless?" he demanded excitedly. "I hung around a day waiting to hear if I was to get a man for the *Kogish*."

"Where is Pete Englund?" Sue asked.

"That's what I wirelessed," Joe answered. "Pet got his hand crushed while we were on the ways. I didn't dare wait any longer, so I had a deckhand bring her, tagging along to keep watch. Now what are we going to do?"

The stranger did not speak. He merely looked at Sue and grinned. She stared back, searchingly now. At first she felt that grin was flippant, and then back of it she sensed something solid.

"What experience?" she asked.

"I've hauled eight million salmon without washing too many off the scows."

"I never saw you," Captain Joe Holt said suspiciously. "What's your name?"

"Barry Randall. I've been out to the westward. Last season I was in Icy Strait."

Captain Joe grunted and walked off. Sue studied this man. The skipper of a cannery tender is not hired lightly. But the season was on and she had to have one.

"How did you get here?" she asked.

"On the *Queen* last night," Barry Randall answered. "Got off at the Knight cannery. Walked up the beach just now."

"All right," Sue agreed suddenly. "Though why you came on a mere chance of a job—"

"I didn't," Barry said. "I knew in Ketchikan the skipper of the *Kogish* was hurt."

Sue started. "You don't waste time."

"Not when I'm going some place."

She smiled, waved a hand toward the float.

"Thanks," Barry said. "I'll like working for you."

She returned to the office. Captain Joe Holt was there, looking for Carter Lloyd. She told him what had happened. Outside of a wheelhouse, Joe was as excitable as a lap dog, and he had worked for Carter Lloyd twenty years. He wanted to do something at once, anything, send messages, run back to Kitchikan. Sue calmed him.

"We've got to operate a cannery, Captain Joe," she said. "Got to fish that big trap hard."

Captain Joe patted her shoulder. He could never remember she was not the little girl he had first known.

"You keep the tallies and things, Walt Maguire will do the canning, and I'll get the fish," he said. "Nothing to worry about. Only—I forgot. I was going to tell Carter."

He turned toward the door but Sue pulled him back.

"I'm boss now," she said. "Tell me."

"It ain't nothing," Captain Joe answered. "It's just happened, when I was coming in—back among the islands. Steve Callan's *Gypsy* was anchored there."

"Who is he?" Sue asked.

"The worst fish-pirate on the coast."

"I don't remember the name."

"He's been mostly up north—Peril Strait and Icy Strait and around there." Captain Joe shook his head and sighed.

II

SUE LLOYD'S father was in her mind all day, but sometimes he was crowded back. The presence of Steve Callan and his *Gypsy* disturbed her, and countless details required attention. When she had time she called Captain Joe into the office and asked what he knew about the fish-pirate.

"Most of 'em are sneak thieves," Joe said. "But Callan's got nerve. Brains, too."

"Why do you suppose he came?" Sue asked.

"Probably things got hot for him farther north."

"The canners here have an agreement not to buy from fish-pirates."

"Yeah, and they forget it when they have an empty can. Outside of Carter Lloyd, who'd stick to his word?"

"Homer Knight would. He put the agreement through."

"Sure," Captain Joe agreed. "I always hook Homer and Carter together. Figure it's a family affair," and he winked elaborately.

"Some day, Captain Joe, I'll pull three hairs out of your head and leave you completely bald," Sue said severely. "If I don't marry Homer it will be just to spite you. It's all you've talked of since I was twelve."

"Homer's a fish-packer, and a solid,

square young feller who ain't going to be a small independent all his life. You can do worse most anywhere."

"And I will if you don't lay off. Ever see Steve Callan?"

"Sure. And he looks just like a fish-pirate. Dark as a Siwash, though there ain't any of that in him. Slim, but like a buggy whip. You know. Tough."

Sue ceased breathing. "Dark and slender," her father had said. She almost told Joe about that, but Captain Joe Holt, while the best skipper she knew when afloat, was inclined to talk too much ashore. Sue must keep that fear for Homer Knight.

From an office window she could watch nearly every activity about the Cannery. Indian women gossiped in front of their little houses, strung along the beach across the cove. The steady rumble of machines making cans came always. Men were rushing about everywhere.

The *Kogish* cast off to pick up a string of scows moored to a dolphin. Sue watched closely. There was little about a boat she did not know and the competence of the new skipper meant much.

Barry Randall went ahead on the spring line, kicked the stern out, backed away, came ahead and turned the *Kogish* in her own length. He hooked onto the scow, brought them in and laid them alongside the wharf. Everything was done with an air, almost a dash. Yet each movement was sure and he did not put sudden strains on clutch and motor or batter boat or tow against piling.

"Kid's all right," Captain Joe admitted when he came in. "First time out he handled her like he knew how."

"Tell him what you can about these waters," Sue said. "Tide tricks and those uncharted rocks."

"Sure. Here's the Knight scout-boat."

Sue met Homer at the float. He waved a message as he came in, called that her father was all right.

"Doc said that broken leg was the best thing that happened," Homer reported. "No skull fracture but concussion, and now that leg will keep him in bed where he belongs."

Sue was silent until they were in the office. Then tears came. She did not know what the day's strain had been.

"But it's over!" Homer exclaimed as he put his arms around her. "No danger now. I'm going to get you away from this canning business. Alaska's no place for a woman."

"One woman has got to like it this season," she said. "Have you seen the *Gypsy?*"

"Steve Callan's boat?"

"She was anchored among the islands this morning."

"Don't worry about Callan. No canner around here will buy fish from him."

"But if he was there this morning he may have been here last night," Sue insisted. "In the dark and rain he could have come without being seen.

"What would he be doing here?"

"Homer!" You're so matter of fact. Don't you ever use your imagination? Someone knocked Dad off the platform. Dad saw him. He was slender and dark. That fits Callan."

"You're using your imagination," Homer Knight scoffed. "Carter was out of his head when he talked. Who ever heard of a fish-pirate coming to a cannery and attacking the owner?"

"But Steve Callan is clever, and there's the Foggy Reef trap."

"And that trap's reputation is enough to keep pirates away. You should have gone to Ketchikan and let Walt Maguire and Captain Joe run the plant. Callan can't do anything. Forget him."

Sue looked at Homer. He was that sort, she knew, practical and direct. At thirty he had come far, and it was because he had no frills, only the one drive. She had thought of it often, had wondered what life would be with a man who lacked whim or fantasy.

"Each word has one meaning, each color one shade," she laughed.

"What are you driving at?" Homer demanded.

"Nothing I'm silly because Dad is all right. Thanks so much for rushing word to me. I know how busy you are."

"Look here, Sue!" he exclaimed. "Let's quit circling around this business. Back in Seattle, the pack sold—you can have Europe or the orient for a honeymoon."

"I haven't time to think about that," she put him off. "Run along and can your own fish."

WHEN Homer had gone, Sue read the doctor's message through twice and then went to tell Walt Maguire, Captain Joe and the other old employees. They grinned delightedly. Even the Indian women smiled when they heard the news.

Back in the office, Sue found Barry Randall studying a large scale chart on the wall. He looked at her.

"You're someone else," he said.

"How do you mean?" she demanded.

"Like this country. It's all right in the fog and the rain, but when the sun comes out and you can see the color and the brightness—well, Alaska just smiles for you."

Sue did not answer. She was too startled. Only a moment before she had been thinking of Homer Knight's unimaginative viewpoint Now she felt a slight flush, and knew it was from pleasure. But Barry Randall was studying the chart once more.

"I don't want to hang the *Kogish* on a pile of bricks," he said. "Captain Joe tells me he handles the Foggy Reef trap and I'll have the other two to the west. The mountain maker was careless along here, wasn't he?"

"He built some fair mountains."

"Yes, but he had holes in his pockets when he carried the rocks for 'em. Dropped too many along this coast."

Sue laughed Suddenly she knew that this was what she needed, someone with her own viewpoint, with lighter moments.

"I'll try not to hit any of them," Barry said, and there was no laughter in his eyes now. "I'd hate to let you down."

Again Sue was startled into silence. An intentness in his voice, the straight look of his dark eyes, was so different than the lightness she felt when he smiled.

"So I'd like to run out there, look things over," Barry continued. "After I know it, I'll find my way in the dark or fog."

"Certainly," Sue said. "And stop at Foggy Reef and see if the trap is fishing. Then I won't need to send out the scout boat."

Homer Knight arrived before dark with another reassuring message from Ketchikan. Then the *Kogish* returned and Barry Randall came at once to the office.

"Get your boilers hot!" he exclaimed. "Tell the squaws to put on their canvas gloves. And speed up those can machines."

"Foggy Reef's fishing?" Sue demanded.

"Fishing! You haven't got enough scows. What a trap!"

"Got a new man, Sue?" Homer asked.

She introduced them. Barry's manner was easy but Homer's was brusque.

"I've got to get back," he said. "If Foggy Reef is fishing, my Low Point trap will be taking some. Walk down to the float with me."

"Thanks for the good news," Sue said to Barry.

"Why are you taking on a stranger at this time?" Homer demanded as they went down the ramp.

"Had to have a skipper."

"Better let me get you a man. I know one or two in Ketchikan I can have here in a day or two."

"Barry Randall handles a boat as if he loved it."

"It takes more that that, the way you're fixed this season. I don't like his looks"

"I do," Sue said almost sharply. "I'll keep him."

"I've warned you."

HOMER hurried away in his swift scout-boat. Sue went to the *Susan Lloyd* to tell Captain Joe but the skipper was asleep. And when she returned to the office, Barry Randall was gone.

strange trap-watcher at Foggy Reef. It looks to me like things have only started, and you've got to make a pack. I don't like to leave you that way."

"And it looks worse'n queer, your showing up the same time Callan did," Captain Joe said hotly.

Barry Randall did not seem to hear. He was looking at Sue, steadily, without a grin, without a twinkle in his eyes.

"I had to show up here sometime," he said quietly. "That was in the cards."

The shock of it was almost physical. Sue found she could not look away from his face.

"You know what I think of this Callan business," Captain Joe snorted, and he went out.

"I want you to stay," Sue said.

"Fine! Now you'd better get some sleep. Goodnight."

Barry Randall did not go near the office the next morning. The cannery was started and late in the afternoon Captain Joe brought in the *Susan Lloyd* with a fair catch from Foggy Reef. The scout boat came back from Ketchikan with news that Matt Jeffers' jaw was broken and he was out for the season. An Indian purse-seiner brought a load of fish and reported that the Knight cannery had more salmon than it could handle.

Captain Joe came to the office and asked if the scout-boat had brought spray nozzles for the *Susan Lloyd's* Diesel. Sue said she knew nothing of them.

"But I wirelessed your Dad about them!" Joe exploded. "Two days ago Same time I told about Pete Englund getting hurt."

Sue went through the file of messages. Homer Knight had brought several with that from the doctor. There was nothing from Captain Joe, nothing about Pete or spray nozzles.

"Homer overlooked it," Sue said. "Excited about Dad."

Captain Joe returned to his boat, grumbling. He told his engineer. Barry Randall was there.

"We've got to have 'em quick," the engineer said.

Men of both crews were lounging on the float. They had gathered about Barry. In twenty-four hours he had become popular. Sue was not the only one who had watched him handle the *Kogish* the first time, and no critics are so severe as seamen.

They liked Barry's manner, too—his whimsical way of telling things, his ready, crooked grin. His lithe body moved easily and with unmistakable certainty, and men note things that tell of competence in an emergency.

The scout boat went to the Knight cannery with messages. Captain Joe Holt complained about the delay. The *Susan Lloyd* might be laid up It was a nuisance running down to Knight's every time they had to send for something.

"Why don't you have a wireless station here?" Barry asked.

"It was Homer's idea to save money," Captain Joe said. "He and Carter Lloyd share the expense, but somehow Homer got the station."

Two Indian purse-seiners came in with fish. In the afternoon the two tenders visited the traps. Foggy Reef was fishing well. Barry brought back two scows of salmon. The Kogish Cove cannery had all it could handle.

The week-end escapement period began, when the traps were to be opened so that fish would not be caught but could pass on to the spawning rivers. Barry Randall was in the office when Captain Joe came in.

"Want to fudge any?" Joe asked.

"Of course not!" Sue retorted. "You know how Dad feels about government regulations."

"It ain't my idea," the skipper grinned. "Only Lacey, that new trap-watcher at Foggy Reef asked if we wanted him to do a little cheating. Says he can smell a fisheries patrol boat ten miles."

"We're having a tough enough time without getting the government down on us," Sue said. "What's the watcher like?"

"Like most of 'em, though he sure can use a rifle. Hit a gull, flying."

"I hope he gets a shot at Callan!" Sue cried.

"How's he handle a skiff?" Barry asked.

"Not so good," Captain Joe admitted. "Seemed scared of a little slop. That's the only thing against Foggy Reef."

They knew what he meant. The floating trap was off a point in Snow Channel, exposed to wind and tide. The weather remained in a cabin on the float when he could, but cooked and slept in a tent on shore, rowing back and forth.

"Callan may quit after one haul," Captain Joe said. "He knows we're watching for him now."

"Where did he sell the fish he stole?" Barry asked.

"Some canner north of here, I suppose," Sue answered. "What I don't understand is that two purse-seiners were with him."

"He worked alone up north," Barry offered. "Nobody else had the nerve to follow Steve Callan's lead."

"He's good," Captain Joe growled. "Must have taken close to six thousand dollars. That hurts."

All three were silent for a while. Barry watched Sue as she checked through reports. Finally he arose.

"I'm going to wander round a bit," he said.

HOMER KNIGHT came with another message from Ketchikan. Carter Lloyd was doing as well as could be expected. The danger of pneumonia had not yet passed but no trouble from the concussion was anticipated. He kept asking about the cannery.

"You ought to go down and spend a few days with him," Homer urged Sue.

"With Steve Callan in these waters?" she retorted.

"He won't bother you with that trap-watcher I sent. Lacey can knock the ash off a cigarette at fifty feet."

Homer had been busy since Foggy Reef trap was robbed, and he wanted details.

"I've had reports on Callan," he frowned. "He's bad. And he has to show up here just when I get all the canners to agree not to buy from pirates. I'll burn the air on those fellows. Tell them somebody's canning Lloyd fish."

"What I want is to see Callan shot!" Sue cried. "With juries freeing every pirate arrested, nothing else will stop him."

"My man, Lacey, may do it for you," Homer laughed. "If you really are that bloodthirsty."

"I told Callan I'd shoot him if he came near here again," the girl said. "He's the man who nearly killed Dad."

"Can't believe that, Sue. Doesn't make sense. I still think Carter was delirious when he told you."

Captain Joe and Walt Maguire, the cannery foreman, came into the office then. All four discussed plans for safeguarding Foggy Reef trap. Homer was impressed by the fact that Steve Callan had struck so quickly, getting the fish before the cannery had even started.

"I'm thinking the same thing," Captain Joe said excitedly. "Sue likes this new skipper of the *Kogish* but it's queer, his showing up when he did. If anybody had a chance to tip Callan off, it was Barry Randall."

"I don't like his looks," Homer Knight agreed. "Get rid of him, Sue."

Sue was ready to blaze out that she would not, but she got hold of herself. She realized that her faith in Barry, if it were faith, was based on that crooked grin, on what she sensed in him. If she had to defend him now, there was nothing she could offer these men. Suddenly she realized that she only wanted to believe there was integrity back of the twinkle in Barry Randall's eyes.

"Call him in and ask him," Walt Maguire suggested, and Captain Joe hurried out.

"I've asked him," Sue said. "Barry offered to leave. He knows he's under suspicion."

"Appealing to your sympathy," Homer scoffed.

Captain Joe was gone fifteen minutes.

He returned to report that Barry Randall could not be found anywhere about the cannery.

Homer frowned. Captain Joe chuckled. Sue discovered she could not speak.

"Sneaked off to get in touch with Callan," Homer said. "I'd fire— No. Keep him on. Watch him. If you can catch him, you may catch Callan too. There's only one way to deal with those fellows."

"You're right," Walt Maguire agreed. "Alaskans will never convict a fish-pirate because they don't act like canners. We've got to handle this in our own way."

"Exactly!" Homer Knight exclaimed. "Wipe out one or two and the rest will quit. Find out where Randall has gone, Sue, what he is doing. It's important. I'll keep in touch."

BARRY could not be found that afternoon. At suppertime Sue saw him coming along the shore past the Indian houses, from the direction of the Knight cannery. He was whistling as he approached the office.

"Where have you been?" Sue asked; and though she tried, she could not be peremptory.

"I'm a cat in a strange house," Barry answered. "Got to look around and learn the lay of things."

"Homer Knight has been here," Sue said in a strained voice.

"Quite a plant he's got. If he keeps on this way he'll have a whopping pack this season."

"Have you been there?" she demanded in swift relief.

"Found a couple of pals and we chewed over old times some. It's an interesting place, that Knight cannery."

Sue caught a peculiar inflection in that.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"He's a driver, this Homer Knight. Headed some place. Everything's run like it was General Motors. Got to be on your toes, working for him. Even his wireless operator is off a ship; not some kid picked up in Seattle. I knew this Sparks out to the westward."

"Dad admires Homer very much," Sue said.

"He's a fish canner. Even got in strong with the Indians. They flock to him. Six boats that first night. You going to marry this Homer?"

"What!" Sue cried furiously. "That's my business."

"Sure, only I'm going to make it mine. Just now—a stranger—Steve Callan showing up at the wrong time—I'm not saying anything. Go for a boat ride with me tomorrow?"

Sue was staring at him in amazement. Now she laughed.

"You left me an out there," she said. "Aren't you tired of boats?"

"I thought you and I could take the scout-boat and spin around a few channels and bays," Barry said. "Sort of mutual benefit cruise. I'd learn these waters a bit and you might get a line on Steve Callan."

"What do you mean?"

"Steve ain't quit. And he ain't staying in sight. I've been studying the charts and there's a hole or two where he could lie up days. Might make him uneasy if we smoke him out."

Sue hesitated. She wanted to go. She wanted to spend a few hours with this man who could make her laugh. But she sensed something mysterious in it all, even in Barry Randall's manner. And she could not evade the suspicions of Homer Knight, Captain Joe and Walt Maguire.

"You'll only worry, staying here," Barry urged.

They went the next afternoon. The scout-boat could do twenty knots and they were quickly out of North Arm and in Snow Channel. They stopped at Foggy Reef trap. Lacey, the new trap-watcher, was in his little cabin on the logs. He was small, with a raspy voice, met them with rifle ready. Even after he learned that Sue was his employer, he remained ungracious.

"I don't like him," Sue said when they had departed.

"He handled that rifle like it was a

third arm," Barry assured her. "Which your trap-watcher should do this season."

They went on down the channel toward the open sea. Barry turned into two large bays, looked into coves, but they did not see a boat. He returned, passed North Arm and threaded a cluster of islands. Two more bays were empty. Not until their return did he see the tip of a mast above trees on a point and wheel into a small, landlocked cove.

Anchored in the center was a purse-seiner. As the throttle was closed and they slowed alongside, they saw *Gypsy* on a wheelhouse name board.

NONE of the crew appeared. The boat seemed deserted. Barry studied the craft as he circled it. Sue saw a face in a porthole. A little later a man appeared on deck. She knew at once it was Steve Callan.

"'Lo, Steve," Barry said casually.

Callan nodded. His dark eyes searched them. He was not excited or suspicious or even hostile. He just waited.

"Having a good season?" Barry asked.

"Fair," was the answer.

"I think the fishing is better in Icy Strait."

"Suits me here."

"Climate is finer up there," Barry said.

"I'm healthy."

Barry waited a moment. His voice was hard when he spoke. "I'm working here now."

"You might leave," Callan said indifferently.

Barry laughed. "I might at that," he said, and opened the throttle.

"What do you make of it?" he asked when they were out of the bay.

"That he intends to rob our trap again!" Sue exclaimed furiously. "Something's got to be done."

"Steve was about as scared as a grizzly looking at a mouse," Barry said.

"Only a bullet will scare him."

"And I've seen Steve Callan scared just by the right sort of talk," Barry said in a puzzled tone.

IV

WORK was resumed after the closed week-end. The traps began fishing at midnight, and at dawn Captain Joe Holt in the *Susan Lloyd* brailed three scow loads at Foggy Reef. Barry Randall went to the west traps and filled one scow.

The cannery was started. The ship from Seattle came in, but the spray nozzles for the *Susan Lloyd* were not abroad. Joe Holt complained bitterly. He had been limping on three cylinders. When he started out in the late afternoon he had only two, so Barry went to Foggy Reef with the *Kogish*. He filled three scows, returned at dark.

"There'll be as many more at daylight," Captain Joe said. "That trap could keep two canneries going."

"Only we ought to have first crack at it," Barry said.

"What do you mean?"

"Some other cannery is getting our fish."

"They won't get any more," Captain Joe snarled. "You told Lacey to start shooting if any boat came in the dark, didn't you?"

"I gave him the written orders."

"Then we've got nothing to worry about."

The *Susan Lloyd's* engineer had been working on his Diesel and had it working before dawn. Captain Joe went out to get the fish from Foggy Reef. Sue was worried. Ever since she had seen Steve Callan on his purse-seiner she had been afraid of another attack. She had Joe call her and went with him.

When they reached the trap it was empty. Captain Joe stared down into the clear water in the heart and began to curse. He yelled for the trap-watcher but no one appeared. The little shack on the logs was deserted. The whistle failed to bring anyone from the tent on shore. They could see the watchman's boat on the beach.

The tender's crew set a boat overside and Sue and Joe rowed in. The tent flaps were down.

"Callan filled his boat and probably those other two," Captain Joe stormed. "And Homer Knight said this Lacey was such a good shot."

Joe lifted the canvas door. Lacey lay on a cot. His hands and feet were tied, his body bound to the bed. A handkerchief was fast around his mouth. His small eyes glared.

"And you're the feller who's so good with a gun!" Captain Joe snorted in disgust as he began to unfasten the ropes.

"They never gave me a chance!" Lacey stormed when his mouth was free. "Two of 'em! Waitin' in the tent when I came!"

"That's no new trick of fish-pirates," Joe said. "Why didn't you stay on the trap where they couldn't get at you?"

"It was too rough. And I've got to eat some time. Wait till I get another crack at 'em."

Sue and Captain Joe returned to the cannery. They had counted on getting enough fish to keep going all day. Now Sue would have to shut down, and if they did not shove salmon into cans in the days that regulations permitted fishing, the season would be a failure.

"We'll stop and see Homer," Sue said.

The Knight cannery was a beehive. Four scows of fish waited at the conveyor and the bins upstairs were full. And always in the past, with Foggy Reef producing its phenomenal catches, the Lloyd plant had made a far greater pack.

Homer Knight was busy, had only a wave for Sue when he saw her on the wharf. Not until she called, whispered the news of Steve Callan's latest raid, did he drop his own affairs.

"This is serious," he said when he was alone in his office with Sue and Captain Joe and had learned the details.

Sue was busy writing. "I'm sending for the United States marshal," she said.

"Nothing will come of that," Homer objected. "You know what arrests and prosecutions amount to."

"An arrest will give me a chance to can some of my own fish," she retorted hotly. "Get this off, Joe, please."

"I'll send it," Homer said as he took the message, and he went out and spoke to his bookkeeper.

"Where were you Sunday in the scout-boat, Sue?" he asked when he returned.

"Hunting Steve Callan. And I found him."

Both men started. Sue told how she and Barry Randall had searched nearby waters, and of their interview with the fish-pirate.

"There it is!" Captain Joe shouted. "What more proof do you want?"

"Proof of what?" she demanded.

"Barry Randall working with Steve Callan. That's how he got word to the *Gypsy*. Right under your nose."

"Of course," Homer agreed. "Fire him at once. There's no doubt now but that Randall is Callan's spy."

"But I heard every word they said," Sue protested. "Callan hates Barry Randall. I could see it. Callan isn't a bit afraid. He actually boasted that he would stay around here."

"They could have used code words," Homer said.

"Or Barry could have dropped a message in a bottle," Captain Joe added.

"And now they're planning to raid my traps," Homer said. "Randall has been snooping around here, talking to my men, asking all sorts of questions."

"I won't believe it!" Sue cried.

THE two men stared. The passion of her defense was startling. "I can't understand this in you," Homer said in a low voice. "I have always thought of you as being solid, unshakable. You are the last person in the world I would think of as falling for the smooth talk of a tramp cannery-man. I have always felt I could depend on your emotions."

Sue Lloyd did not speak. Suddenly she saw that Homer was right. She knew nothing of Barry Randall, except his grin and a quality she had sensed in him.

"Yeah, a fancy smile fooled you, Sue," Captain Joe snorted.

"There is no doubt in my mind now but that he is at the bottom of all this,"

Homer Knight continued. "The wireless operator knew Randall out to the westward and says his reputation is bad. If he were trustworthy, he would have had a job two months ago. All the circumstances are strange. He was in a position to tip off both raids on Foggy Reef. Keep him on and you will go broke."

Sue did not answer. Her mind told her that these men were right.

"Another thing," Homer said. "My scout-boat was in Ketchikan last night and the story around town is that your father is not so well. I wirelessed the doctor this morning but have not had an answer. I think you should go in at once."

She was watching him in sudden terror. Motherless since she could remember, she was very close to Carter Lloyd. And because she was, Sue knew her father better than anyone. She knew that no matter what happened he would want her to remain and put up the pack.

"No!" she exclaimed. "I won't leave while the run is on. But I'll burn the air between here and Ketchikan."

She wrote messages, to the hospital, to the doctor, to friends, and gave them to Homer.

"And now I'll talk to Barry Randall," Sue said as she hurried out.

Barry was asleep aboard the *Kogish* when she returned. Captain Joe called him and he found Sue alone in the office. He was not smiling. He looked at her steadily, with eyes that did not twinkle but were soft with sympathy.

"You can't fire me now, Sue!" he exclaimed abruptly. "I've got to stay and help you."

"Help me!" she repeated angrily. "You got a message to Steve Callan Sunday. He cleaned out Foggy Reef trap again last night."

"I expected he would," Barry said in a quiet voice. "Everything was set for it."

"You knew?"

"I doped it out that he'd hit hard and quick. I'm not blind or deaf."

"I hear you've been asking a lot of questions."

"You've probably heard worse of me. You've made up your mind, or somebody has made it up, that I'm in with Steve Callan. All right. I'll quit. Quit your payroll, I mean. But I won't quit working for you."

Sue's voice was harsh because she struggled so against a desire to believe him. "What do you mean by that?" she demanded.

"You've got to have me. Several ways."

Barry Randall turned and went out. Sue did not speak. More than ever she knew she must believe him. Yet there was nothing except this inexplicable bond between them. On the other side were all the facts Homer and Captain Joe had marshaled, facts she herself could not avoid.

Barry went aboard the *Kogish* and packed his few belongings, then walked across the float to the *Susan Lloyd*. Captain Joe was in his room aft the wheelhouse. He scowled when he saw Barry in the door.

"Get your spray nozzles yet?" Barry asked.

"What's it to you?" Captain Joe retorted.

"You won't get them until you go after them. Putting the *Susan Lloyd* out of commission is part of the scheme."

Captain Joe continued to scowl. He had no faith in this man now and he did not hide his attitude. Barry continued in an even tone:

"That trap-watcher, Matt Jeffers, said the first boat to raid Foggy Reef was the *Glory*. Sunday when I saw Steve Callan's purse-seiner I noticed the letters on the stern were painted on a strip of copper, not on the hull itself. I noticed signs of wear on the starboard nameboard on the wheelhouse. As if something had rubbed against it with the vibration. *Glory* and *Gypsy* are the same length. Name boards with *Glory* on them could be hung over the two with *Gypsy* on them. They would rub against the regular board. The copper strip on the stern could be changed."

"What of it?" Captain Joe growled.

"An Indian kid at Homer Knight's cannery has a board with *Glory* on it," Barry said. "He fished it out of the water under the cannery the morning after the run began. Look up your tide tables and you'll see there was a small tide then. Slack about daylight. The Knight cannery is four miles from the mouth of North Arm."

Captain Joe did not speak when Barry paused. He still glowered.

"You can see the board and talk to the kid," Barry said. "You can look up the tides. You can talk to the skipper of Homer Knight's big tender. He'll tell you Low Point trap, the best trap Knight has, hasn't fished well this season. Hardly paid its keep. If you talk to the Indian women at Knight's you'll learn the Siwash purse-seiners haven't been doing well. You'll learn, if you snoop around, that nearly all Knight fish have come in after dark, with the boats gone by daylight. You'll learn the *Glory*, the *Fanny F.* and the *Oscar* have come in with decks awash, and if you look in the register of Pacific coast ships you won't find a purse-seiner under those three names."

"What are you getting at?" Captain Joe demanded hotly.

"If you snoop around some more you'll learn a stranger named Lacey was at the Knight cannery four days doing nothing—until he was loaned to Sue as a trap-watcher. You'll not learn, though, that the wireless operator got kicked out by the steamship company and that he can't get a job with any line on this coast. I know that, even if he is one of the best Sparks you ever saw. After your spray nozzles don't come, and you get to asking around, you'll be interested in that operator."

Captain Joe was staring now, mouth open, excitement rising.

"I'm fired," Barry said. "Sue Lloyd is in a tough spot. She's worried about her father and she knows that if Steve Callan keeps on raiding Foggy Reef she won't get a pack. She thinks I'm in with Callan, or somebody's made her think it, so I've got to go. That leaves it up to you. Quit sounding off until you know what you're talking about. Quit guessing. Start thinking. Use your eyes."

"You trying to make me think that Homer—"

"I wonder if you *can* think," Barry cut in savagely "Did I tell you those boats I saw running without lights were coming from Knight's cannery? Do you know Knight is putting up a record pack? Get busy and check on what I've told you. Then you'll know that Sue Lloyd's fish are going into Knight cans."

V

BARRY RANDALL did not leave the Kogish Cove cannery until after breakfast. He ate with the shore crew but no one saw him after that. A busy day had begun. Every man had his own exacting job. No one except Captain Joe knew Barry had quit. None saw him depart.

Sue Lloyd went to bed after Barry left her. She was tired, had been up before dawn. But she was worried about her father, found herself strangely upset by Barry's departure, and she slept little.

Captain Joe took the *Kogish* to brail the west traps. Two Indian purse-seiners had brought fish but there was not enough to keep the cannery running long. As Joe went past the Knight cannery he saw loaded scows at the conveyors. Homer did not lack salmon. Joe remembered that when he got to the west traps and found few fish.

Sue was up when Captain Joe returned.

"Homer has been here," she said. "He will loan me a man to run the *Kogish* for a few days. Says he is hard pressed but can't let us down. I've wirelessed Ketchikan for a skipper."

"So you kicked Barry Randall out like we told you?"

"Barry quit. Captain Joe, I can't believe he was in with Steve Callan."

"Maybe," Joe growled.

"You think he wasn't?" Sue cried. "I'll

never forgive myself if we were wrong."

"Skippers of cannery-tenders ain't anything for you to get excited about," Joe said. "None's much good. Besides, we got other things to worry about. This first run may quit any day and we ain't packed enough to load a rowboat."

"That's not all," Sue said. "No one packed fish last year, same as we did. And we've bought all that new machinery, a new fifty thousand dollar tender, Dad fooled too much with the stock market—we've got to fill every can this season or lose the cannery."

"Anybody else know that?" Captain Joe asked.

"Homer, of course."

The skipper was silent. He took off his old cap and rubbed his bald head. He could wheel a boat through fog or black night but this had him baffled. He only knew that Sue and Carter Lloyd were family to him, his own people, and that something must be done.

"Never mind," he said. "We'll get fish if I have to watch that Foggy Reef trap myself."

"Then you think it was queer that Lacey was tied up while Callan robbed us last night?" Sue exclaimed.

Captain Joe hesitated. He did not know that Sue had suspected that and he was not certain what to think. "Lacey is Homer's man," he said. "You don't believe Homer'd send you a crook."

"Not if he knew it. And there is no one else we can get. Did you see Barry leave?"

"No, come to think of it. And no ship for him to catch. May be he got out to some other cannery in a purse-seiner."

Captain Joe took the scout-boat that afternoon and went down to the Knight cannery for wireless messages. After sending some forceful dispatches about fuel nozzles, he wandered about the plant. Joe knew every man in an important position, the skippers and crews of the two tenders, all the Indian women and most of the children. He had been in North Arm since the beginning.

NEWS of the first raid on Foggy Reef had spread and it brought many questions. Joe gave information sparingly, and slipped in his own queries. Before he went home he walked down the row of Indian cabins and talked to the children, passed out a few dimes and quarters for candy.

Back in Kogish Cove, he learned that the *Susan Lloyd's* big Diesel motor would not operate on more than two cylinders because of defective fuel nozzles.

"I've hauled fish for years with the *Kogish* and I can still do it," Joe said. "And there'd better be fish to haul."

"I am going with you again," Sue said. "Foggy Reef is the most important thing in our lives right now."

They made the run quickly. But again, as they approached, the trap was deserted, the little shack empty.

"Lacey gone and got himself tied up again?" Captain Joe snarled as he tugged at the whistle cord.

The tent ashore was closed and no one appeared. The skiff was gone, too. They ran alongside the trap, and even from the wheelhouse they could see that old Foggy Reef had made another phenomenal catch.

But the trap was unwatched. Lacey did not appear. Captain Joe pulled up a scow and ordered the brailing to begin. Once more that day, he and Sue rowed ashore.

And once more they found Lacey bound on his cot. Only this time the man's head was bloody, and when Captain Joe began work on the knots he found them far tighter and more intricate than in the morning.

A new quality showed in the trap-watcher's furious outburst. Sue had not liked him before, and she detested him now as he made venemous threats.

"Only this time Steve Callan got you in broad daylight," Captain Joe sneered. "You must have seen 'em."

"I didn't see anybody!" Lacey yelped. "Why should I expect 'em before dark? I was bending over to untie the tent flaps. Next thing I knew I was tied on the cot."

The man swayed when he stood up. He was still dizzy from a savage blow that had opened his scalp.

"We'll have to leave a deckhand to watch tonight," Joe said. "Where's your rifle?"

They could not find it. The boat was gone, too. The watcher said he had brought the weapon ashore. He began cursing again. Evidently it was a favorite rifle.

"Though it didn't do us any good," Captain Joe barked as he rowed out to the trap.

Lacey was put to bed in the fo'c's'le of the *Kogish*. Sue bathed and bound his head. Later, in the wheelhouse, she watched the brail lift load after load of gleaming, flopping salmon from the trap and deposit them in scows.

"Greatest trap ever!" Captain Joe exclaimed, for he could never get over his wonder at the thousands of fish it snared. "Now what you suppose this last thing means?"

"Steve Callan would know we'd come about this time," Sue said. "It was useless to tie Lacey up so soon."

"And he wouldn't risk stealing fish in daylight. This whole thing is getting queer. Steve Callan ain't goin' to all that trouble to steal a rowboat."

Darkness came before all the fish were brailed. None of the crew would remain to watch the trap. They pointed out that, without a weapon, they would be helpless.

"And I don't blame 'em," Captain Joe muttered. "But there'll be no fish here for Steve Callan until after midnight. I'll come back then myself."

THEY arrived in Kogish Cove in time to keep the machines going. Sue found, too, a man from a cannery twenty miles north who offered to sell two scows of fish that he would be unable to can within the twenty-four limit. She needed them and sent the *Kogish* in command of the skipper Homer Knight had loaned.

"The *Susan Lloyd* can limp out to Foggy Reef," Captain Joe assured her. "And I've got two rifles and an automatic." He was excited After uncertainty and disaster, a chance for action stirred him. He refused to let Sue accompany him. "Callan might do some shooting too," he insisted.

"It isn't right that you should take a risk," Sue said. "It is the U. S. marshal's business. He should have been here by now."

"Didn't he answer your message?"

"No, and there has been plenty of time."

Captain Joe remembered Sue writing that message. He remembered Homer Knight taking it to send to the operator. And Joe remembered what Barry Randall had told him about keeping his eyes open and doing some thinking.

"I'll drop in and see if there is an answer," he said.

The *Susan Lloyd's* engineer reported that he would not be ready for half an hour. Sue went to the office, Joe to talk to Walt Maguire.

"I can't tell you much now, but keep an eye out for anything," the skipper whispered. "There's something more than trap-robbing going on here."

He waited impatiently for the word to start. The big Diesel motor stuttered on two cylinders, and one of them was none too good. Captain Joe pulled out regardless, turned in at the Knight cannery and went to the office.

"What's new?" Homer asked.

"Not a thing," Captain Joe answered. "Any message from that marshal?"

"No. I'll send it up if it comes. The doctor wirelessed that Carter is better. Get that to Sue. What's the matter with the *Susan Lloyd?*"

"Limping a bit, but we're all right. Going down to Foggy Reef now. You seem busy."

"Getting a lot of fish," Homer said as he hurried away.

Captain Joe went down North Arm, bucking the tide. The big, heavy tender shivered from the uneven vibration of the

motor. Often Joe could hear the exhaust of only one cylinder. He began to curse. The tide ran swiftly in Snow Channel.

He went well out to get past Half Tide Rock, turned west. The ailing cylinder sputtered, died. The chief called up that it was out for good.

"Give her all you've got in that last barrel," Joe said.

That all was not enough. The *Susan Lloyd* was being swept eastward stern first with the flood. After ten minutes Captain Joe knew he could not even get back into North Arm and home.

And when Captain Joe was sure of that, the door of his room opened and Sue Lloyd stepped into the wheelhouse.

"This means Foggy Reef is open to anyone tonight," she said. "Steve Callan wasn't so dumb."

THEY could do nothing about it. The trap was only three miles away but a strong current was pushing the crippled boat farther toward the east.

"And we can see the trap from here!" Captain Joe wailed. "I'm going to wring Homer Knight's neck."

"What do you mean?" Sue cried in astonishment.

Captain Joe gasped. He had let rage trip him. "Nothing," he said lamely. "Only if those messages I sent for spray nozzles had gone through, we wouldn't be here. And what you doing on my boat?" he ended hotly. "You was sent to bed long ago."

"I intended all the time to come," she said. "Captain Joe, isn't there anything we can do?"

"Pray that the last cylinder don't go back on us," he answered.

The cylinder held. Joe worked in behind an island, out of the worst of the current. After studying the tide table, he said they could be back at the cannery by three-thirty.

At midnight Sue lay down on the broad seat in the wheelhouse. Later, when Joe crept out to test the current, he saw a light far to the westward. That blaze of deck lamps meant only one thing. Steve Callan was raiding Foggy Reef trap for the third time, raiding it while Captain Joe watched helplessly.

He did not call Sue, but he muttered curses as he edged back behind the island. An hour later he tried it again, found that the tide had lessened a bit, that he could make headway. The flood lights on the *Gypsy* were not to be seen now. Steve Callan had the fish and was on his way to market.

The skill of long years went into gaining every possible inch. Captain Joe had only one thought, to get to the Knight cannery and see for himself if Steve Callan were selling fish to Homer. He was almost at North Arm when Sue arose and stood beside him in the darkness.

"I haven't been asleep," she said. "I have been thinking."

"Callan raided the trap."

"I wasn't thinking of fish. Not even thinking, perhaps. Women get some things without thinking. I know now I made a mistake about Barry Randall."

"How you mean?"

"Not believing in him."

"Maybe so."

"Barry couldn't have had anything to do with Steve Callan!" she cried. "Callan tried to kill Dad and Barry Randall never—"

"What?" Captain Joe shouted.

Sue told what her father had said, what she had told only to Homer Knight. Joe cursed and bellowed for more speed. He called a deckhand and the cook and gave each a rifle, slipped the automatic into his own pocket.

"The darker it gets, the clearer things are," he said. "Stay close behind me, you two."

The Knight cannery was a blaze of light when they approached it. Three purse-seiners were waiting to unload. Captain Joe surged up to the float, which lay in darkness on the other side of the building. Lines were swiftly made fast.

"You stay here," the skipper barked at Sue as he left.

Captain Joe was running, up the ramp, along the platform and into the cannery. The men with rifles were right behind him. And Sue Lloyd was at their heels.

THE bright light in the cannery blinded them at first. Two long rows of busy Indian women looked up, startled, as the armed force swept through to the wharf beyond.

Flood lamps revealed every detail here, even the purse-seiners moored alongside. Several men stood about, on wharf and decks, curiously quiet and motionless. None of the usual activity of a salmon cannery was to be seen.

At the right stood Homer Knight. Sue, stopping inside the door, saw him first.

Facing Homer, commanding the entire situation with his back against a pile and a rifle in his hands, was Barry Randall.

"Joe!" Homer called in great relief. "Get that man before he—"

He moved, then stopped.

"Keep still!" Barry commanded. "Joe, did you—?"

He held his weapon alertly, but lowered it when he saw Captain Joe's face. Joe was beaming. Sue, watching from the doorway, could not understand as Joe led his men to Barry's side and wheeled there, facing Homer.

She only knew that she was glad.

"You came at the right time, Captain Joe," Barry said. "Though I had 'em trapped."

He grinned at the old man; then, as his glance went back to Homer Knight his lips tightened, and he raised the gun slightly. All the men were staring at Barry Randall now.

"How'd you get to Foggy Reef yesterday?" Joe demanded excitedly. "You sure tied Lacey up."

"Walked the beach," Barry answered. "It was tough, but I had to have a rifle and a boat. Lacey seemed easiest."

Barry was watching Homer Knight as he talked and the rifle was cocked, ready.

"Remember what I said about that nameboard Steve Callan lost?" he asked. "Steve is using the port one tonight. Go get it, Captain Joe."

Joe leaped aboard, climbed the rail, jerked off a false board. The purse-seiner *Glory* became the *Gypsy*, most notorious craft in Alaska.

There was a murmur from the men gathered on the pier. Some of them thrust forward angrily—Knight's own men. But they let Barry Randall handle this.

"Now take one of your men and dig Steve Callan out of the fo'c's'le," Barry said. "He doesn't show on deck when he comes here selling Lloyd fish."

"You're crazy!" Homer Knight shouted. "I never knew this boat was the *Gypsy*."

"You knew it because you made all the plans," Barry said coldly. "You brought Steve Callan from up north. You brought Lacey to watch trap. You fooled Carter Lloyd and Sue, trying to steal Foggy Reef."

Homer Knight became very quiet. "Look here," he said. "There's been a big mistake. Come into the office and we'll talk it over."

"You'll talk here or in court," Barry answered.

"But you're wrong, man!" Homer protested, and his voice rose. "The Lloyds are my best friends. No one could believe that I'd do them any harm, especially by hooking up with a dirty crook of a fish-pirate like Steve Callan."

Barry Randall did not answer that. Sue saw the crooked grin across his face as he glanced at the *Gypsy*.

Steve Callan was standing on her deck. He had been listening. Now he vaulted to the pier and stood between Barry and Homer.

Sue Lloyd shivered as she watched him. He was not afraid. He did not seem to be angry as he looked at Barry.

"You did me enough damage last season," Steve said.

"This is Lacey's rifle," Barry answered "Maybe I can't handle it as well, but good enough."

A long moment the two men stood

there, studying each other. Barry Randall was smiling slightly, and neither of them made any move at all.

"I've seen you shoot," Steve Callan said. "You knocked my cap off that night near Point Adolphus. Only tonight I haven't got a cap."

He turned his back on Barry then. Sue could see his dark face beneath the black hair, and she saw hate in it now.

"I'm a dirty crook of a fish-pirate, am I?" he snarled. "I'm a fish pirate, all right. I take my chances, play the game. You're the dirty crook, planning things, pulling wires, trying to hide, getting ready to ditch me."

He walked slowly toward Homer Knight.

"Stand still," Barry Randall commanded.

"Only you can't hide from this," Steve Callan said.

He jerked out a knife and darted forward. Before anyone could move, he was upon Homer, striking furiously.

Barry and Captain Joe rushed up but there was no stopping this mad whirlwind of battle. It swept across the pier. Homer's feet struck the stringpiece. The knife was in his chest as he and his foe shot out of sight, down into the darkness.

Men ran forward. No sound came from down there. Dimly they could see the *Gypsy's* big seine-boat rocking from the shock of falling bodies. But there was no movement in the water.

Lights were swung around. Fishermen sprang into boat and the tide swept them into the blackness beneath the cannery. Their calls brought no hint of rescue.

"Knocked out!" a man shouted. "They'll never come up."

For a few moments there was a swirl of useless activity on the pier. Then the men stopped trying to do what they knew could not be done; there was no way that Knight and Callan could possibly be rescued now. Gradually the men gathered there wandered away, talking in low voices.

Sue Lloyd found herself alone on the wharf with Barry Randall. He had not seen her until then. After a moment he lowered the hammer of his rifle and came toward her.

"Did Captain Joe tell you anything?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"No," Sue said. "But I told Captain Joe something. Just a little while ago. I said I had made a mistake in not believing in you."

The grin she loved crept across his face.

"I didn't blame you for anything," he said.

"And I have never doubted you!" she cried. "I know it now. I couldn't doubt you."

She walked out to meet him then, her hands outstretched. The rifle clattered to the wharf as Barry's arms were flung out.

"And I couldn't quit working for you," he said. "I'm never going to quit."

Help Kidneys Pass 3 Lbs. a Day

Doctors say your kidneys contain 15 miles of tiny tubes or filters which help to purify the blood and keep you healthy. Most people pass about 3 pints a day or about 3 pounds of waste.

Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning shows there may be something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

An excess of acids or poisons in your blood, when due to functional kidney disorders, may be the cause of nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

ADV.

Lost House

By FRANCES SHELLEY WEES

They called it Lost House, that island mansion locked in the cypress darkness of British Columbia's forest—and the only stranger received there came riding to deliver a message of death. Beginning an unusual mystery novel

PROLOG

At Scotland Yard
April 11th
Noon

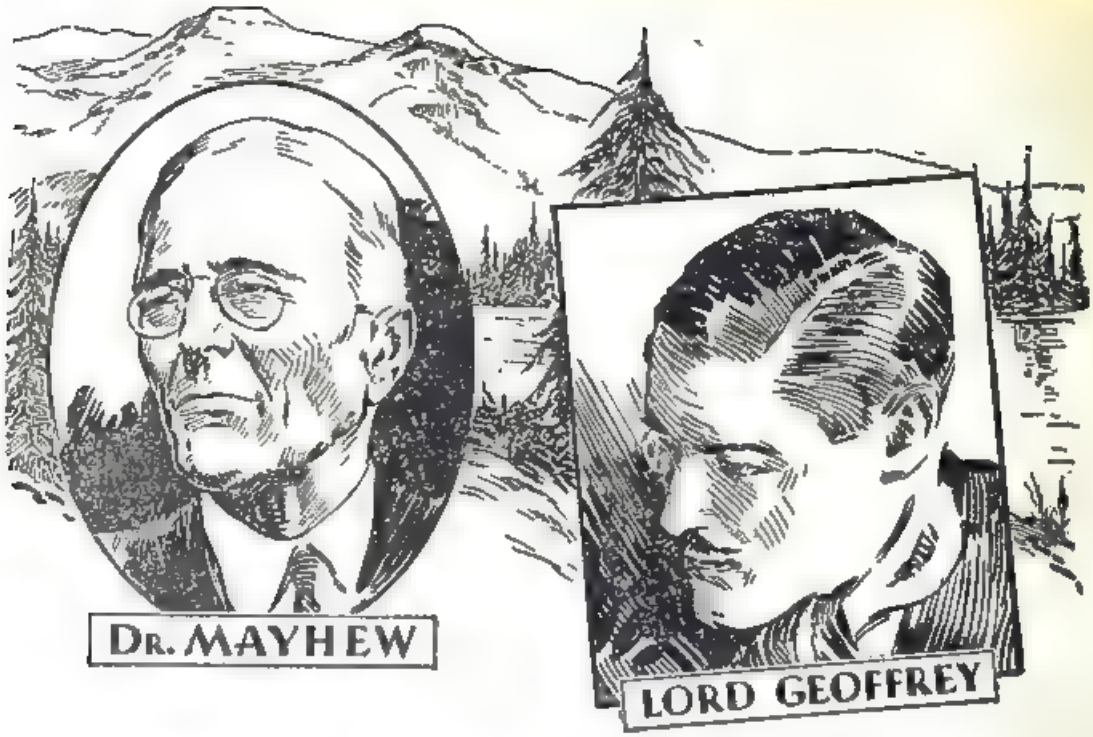
THE man behind the desk was ruddy and wide-shouldered, with a mane of white hair and a power of authority upon him as strong and sharp-cut as his Roman nose. His finger touched the map before him, trailing across the multicolored blocks of the states of America. It passed the Canadian border and stopped with a thump.

"Here," he said. "Somewhere hereabouts is the heart of the thing, so far as we know. It's a big country and the miles are wild. And I needn't tell you, I think, how clever and damned desperate The Angel can be."

The man who faced him was leaning forward with hand supporting his jaw, his features half hidden. "I know," he nodded. "I've read the dossier. When and where do I start?"

Lord Montana placed a fingertip upon the prow of his nose. In his seven years as superintendent of the Yard he had dispatched many men to chase the wild goose of danger; but never a wilder one than this, he thought.

"The arrangements have been made,"



he said. "Lost House is the starting place, and you are on your own from there. Are your instructions clear?"

The man with his face half hidden relaxed in a brief smile. In London and the world outside he was known by a name, but here he was primarily a number in the great files of crime. You might see that number—M38—on such Yard reports as those covering the Coverly Diamonds Case and the Hirondelle Affair. To his superiors he was known as a keen and resourceful agent, with a flair for mummery and a finger that was sometimes too quick upon the trigger.

He stood erect. "My instructions are simple enough to give me a free hand, which is what I hoped for," he said. "They are calling it 'the stuff of which dreams and death are made,' and we know that The Angel is behind it. We must smash the traffic and smash The Angel as well."

"Ummm," said Lord Montana. "You will be circumspect—"

"Of course, sir."

"You will not endanger the people at Lost House—"

"Naturally."

The superintendent of Scotland Yard cleared his throat. "In this instance all due caution is imperative. Let the Americans keep their custom of shooting first and then asking questions; you know our regulations on that score."

"Yes, sir. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing but this—" Lord Montana extended his big hand and his fingers gripped the fingers of the other. "Bon voyage and the best of luck."

I

Near Dark Forest,
British Columbia.
June 20,
8 A. M.

DELILAH ambled contentedly over the green grass in the little clearing, her white sides dappled with the shadows of the new green leaves. David, sitting comfortably on a log before his breakfast fire, decided that she was a pretty sight, and that he ought to be an artist. He would paint this picture just as it was posed, a white mare standing against the

slim white trunks of the birch trees on a green and silver June morning, and, far beyond her through a rift in the trees, the snowy dream-like peak of a mountain misty against the sky.

But if he had been an artist, he consoled himself, he would have driven himself crazy long ago trying to get into his pictures the thin heady scent of spring in the mountains, the taste of a willow-bud meditatively chewed along the trail, the impalpable fading smoke of a wood-fire floating in the dusk; above all, the stillness of the mountains. Not, of course, that an artist would really like them to move about, nor would he be happy if they did, these gray giants. But their stillness was somehow too still, too much of a pose. One felt almost that the moment one's back was turned the mountains swung and rolled and careened drunkenly in space, only to halt and freeze into that unnatural immobility at the first hint of a human glance.

"Delilah," David said candidly, "I think perhaps I made the coffee too strong."

Delilah sniffed, but did not look at him. The grass was tempting. But after a moment she lifted her head sharply and gazed off toward the north, while the light breeze lifted her white mane and stirred it. She listened.

"There's nothing to hear," David told her lazily. "This is the forest primeval, my girl, and the murmuring pines and the hemlocks. Without the hemlocks. So don't pretend. You haven't read any history books, so you can't be disturbed by the ghost of an Indian brave creeping up on us through the trees."

Delilah pawed the ground once with a white hoof. She continued to listen. David put down his coffee cup. He raised his head.

Someone was whistling, far off through the wood, a soft clear merry whistling that came steadily nearer. The tune began to be distinguishable. . . . What was it? Something quick and smart, a splendid tune to walk to through a bright June morning. . . . *tum tum te tum, tum tum te tum . . . Faust!* Here let me sit, cozy and dry, up on the *tum te* with my *tum te tum te tum te*, and while rafts and boats travel by.

The whistling stopped, and a voice came, high and clear and sweet, as if calling to a dog; saying the dog's name over and over, a name David could not quite catch. There was a little rustling in the leaves beyond Delilah, and the dog trotted into the clearing, nose down on some interesting scent. At sight of Delilah he gave a gruff bark, and stopped. He regarded her with sharp eyes, and saw David beyond her. He trotted round Delilah and stopped to investigate the man.

"'Morning," David said cheerfully.

The dog gave another gruff excited bark, and repeated it several times. In the near distance his mistress—this astonishing mistress in the middle of a wilderness—heard, and called out sharply, "Here, Pourquoi! Here Pourquoi! Come here at *once!*"

The dog barked again. There was the sound of quick running feet, and then the girl said crossly, but with a tinge of anxiety, "Pourquoi, do you hear me? Come away from that terrible dreadful thing at once! Quick, do you hear me?

David grinned. The dog did not move. He could see a small figure coming toward him through the trees, eyes down on the dog's level, searching for him.

SHE was a very small girl in a brown jersey with an orange tie at her throat, and a brown corduroy skirt, and scuffed little brown shoes, and her hands were thrust down into the pockets of her brown jacket. Her thick curls were flying, and held back from her face by a narrow band of ribbon. Her cheeks were pink, her black eyes wide, her scarlet lips glowing and half parted as she stared at David. After a second her pose relaxed and she said with a quirk of her mouth, "I'm sorry."

"Sorry?" David inquired.

"I'm sorry I called you a terrible dreadful thing. But I thought you were a skunk."

"Pourquoi has a penchant for skunks?"

"He's always finding them. Once I had to keep him practically buried in sand up to his neck for three days."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not a skunk, then," David said. "It can't be pleasant to be practically buried in sand up to one's neck for three days. I suppose it's obvious why you call him Pourquoi?"

"He is terrifically inquisitive." She came a step nearer, into the clearing. She finished her scrutiny and drew a quick breath. "Do you realize that you look a great deal like me?" she asked. "You've got black eyes, too, and brown hair that flies all over your head the way mine does, even if yours is short, and you've got skin this color, kind of yellow, and you've got my nose. You might perfectly easily be my long-lost brother."

David swallowed. Then, "Have you a long-lost brother?" he inquired.

She shook her head. "No. I haven't anything but a mother, except a lot of old family portraits of grandfathers and things. A brother would be very nice. I suppose you couldn't possibly be related to us?" she inquired hopefully. "I mean, even a cousin—"

"Do you know," David said apologetically, "I suppose it's very stupid of me, but I haven't the slightest idea who you are. So it's rather difficult to say whether or not we are cousins, but I'm afraid we're not. Unless, of course, generations back. But we've got a family tree at home and everybody for four generations is marked on it, and I've met a good many of them. Not that we're the landed gentry—" he said hastily, "we're all farmers and doctors and hardware shops. And my name's David Aylesworth," he told her.

"Mine's Pamela Leighton," she returned. "I thought perhaps you'd come from England looking for us. It would have been lovely. I mean, somebody of our own. I've not been in England for ages, and I didn't meet half the family then. So you might have been a cousin, for all I know." She pulled a leaf from a branch over her head and examined it carefully. "Which are you?" she inquired.

"Which am I?"

"Are you a farmer or a doctor or a hardware shop?"

"Some day I'll be a doctor," he said with a grin. "I've just finished my medical course. But I haven't practiced yet."

"It sounds terribly interesting," she said wistfully. "At Lost House one doesn't often hear of people who do things."

DAVID was silent. After a moment Pamela looked up at him and caught the expression on his face. "Why," she said in her soft voice, "you don't know about Lost House, do you?"

"I'm afraid I don't. It sounds very mysterious and interesting."

She shook her head. "It isn't. That's just the name. And of course it isn't really Lost House, you know. My grandfather—it was he who built it—he named it Courmont Towers. Silly, because there aren't any towers, but that's what our place in England was called. And when he came here—" she paused. "Do you know about the silver mine over the hill behind us?"

"I passed it last night in the dusk. I didn't pay much attention. There are a good many abandoned workings in this part of the mountains."

"That one was ours," she said in a small voice. "My grandfather bought it. He was having a bad time over in England, and he was very angry about the huge income tax—all this was after the war, you know—so he sold everything he had over there and bought this silver mine in Canada. He thought he would be a millionaire in a few months, and he built Lost House the first year.

"He wanted to have a place where his friends could visit him, of course, and anyway I suppose he didn't know very much about smaller houses. And he wouldn't sell any of the old family things, and so he had to have a place to put them. It cost him a very great deal of money, and then . . . the silver mine was worked out almost at once. So he died, but mother

and I couldn't go back to England. I don't remember much about it, because I was only four when grandfather died. We went over with him, of course, but I mean we couldn't stay. Mother wanted to, dreadfully, but she couldn't."

"Couldn't she?" David repeated, wondering.

"No, because she'd invested all my father's money with grandfather's here in the mine and Lost House. So we have nothing but Lost House." She glanced at him. "Haven't you seen it, then? Lost House?"

"No. I came over the hills last night, and got down here after dark. I'm very near a lake, am I not?"

"You're right on a lake," she told him. "Would you like to see Lost House? I think it's beautiful."

"Very much," David said promptly.

She moved across the clearing and into the dark grove of pines which encircled it on the west. David followed, and in five minutes they were clear of the trees. He made an exclamation of surprise. They stood on a rocky point not more than twenty feet above the water of a deep black lake caught in the folds of the hills. It looked to be a mile long and half that distance across. To west and south the high rounded hills rose sharply to the sky, clothed in their dark pines and firs without a hint of softer green. The hill over which David had come last night dropped sheer into the water, save for a narrow ledge of rock and sand at the brink. On the north the hills widened out to provide a frame for the snowy mountain peaks.

HALFWAY across the lake and perhaps a hundred yards from the northern shore lay an island, a small island around whose circumference had been built a high stone wall. Over the top of the wall lay the bulk of a great house. It, too, was built of stone. A dozen chimneys sent threads of smoke up into the still blue sky; green fans of ivy crept up over gray walls between windows whose glass shone in the early sun. The clipped and careful shapes of tended shrubbery were visible here and there over the wall; and, from the height on which they stood, David could see clearly the velvet green of a lawn at the back of the house, and, farther down the island, the exact rows of a vegetable garden.

"Do you like it?" Pamela inquired.

"Like it!" David repeated, turning toward her. "Did you by any chance wave a wand before my eyes?" he asked.

She laughed, a quick delighted laugh.

"That place doesn't exist," David went on. "It's like that old German place—what was it? Germelshausen. That came up out of the earth once in a hundred years. There can't be such a place as Lost House, not here. We are in the middle of the Rocky Mountains. Nobody lives in this country but grizzly bears and Mounted Policemen and maybe a forest ranger. So it must be magic. I don't believe it."

"*We* live here," Pamela insisted. "And it isn't magic. There isn't even a flick of magic. Not a flick. I love Lost House, you know. I think it's the most beautiful place in the world, but it's solid, and it's stuffy. You've no idea. We ought to be eating venison steak and roast bear, but instead we have artichokes and alligator pear. From Vancouver. And I want a pony in the worst way to go off in the hills with, but mother won't let me. She says I'd get my finger nails all mossy, and anyway, a bear might eat me."

She sighed. "Mother would like to pin wings on Lost House and fly it over to Kent, but I'm glad she can't. I think England would be stuffy, too. I mean, it's so small, and there aren't any mountains like these. Like the Rockies. Are there?"

"Not unless they've been added quite recently," David said, answering her rhetorical question.

"Is that supposed to be a joke?" she asked coldly.

"Sorry," David apologized.

"Well, perhaps it isn't so bad," she decided. "Only I have to be careful. Most

of the men at Lost House make very silly jokes, and frightful puns, and I made up my mind long ago that I simply would never laugh at anything that I didn't think was funny. Mother says I ought to be polite and try to help entertain them, but really—" she looked at him suddenly. "I suppose you can't think what I mean when I talk about the people at Lost House," she said.

"I am rather in the dark," David admitted.

She turned and began to walk slowly back to the clearing. "Paying guests," she said.

"Paying guests?"

"We have to live, you see."

"You certainly do," David said cheerfully.

"I DON'T mind," she told him. "It seems perfectly honest and decent to me. They get a marvelous holiday and rest and we have a grand cook. But of course it hurt's mother's pride terrifically, and gets on her nerves. And she makes all sorts of fuss about Lost House, and never takes anyone in who hasn't been vouched for by some of her own friends, and even then they practically have to have passports. So it's all very exclusive and dull. And, of course," she said, and stopped.

David waited. "She keeps importing people for me to marry," she said forlornly.

David bent forward and broke off a blade of grass. "Are you going to marry any of them?" he inquired.

"Not so far, I'm not. But I suppose some day I shall. What else can I do? Mother will wear me down in time, because she wants so badly to go back to England and our only hope is for me to marry someone wealthy enough to take us. I don't want to. I should love to go to Vancouver or perhaps Calgary, and take a course in a business school, and get a job out here in the West, and be myself. But mother couldn't bear it, of course. So I've never mentioned it to her. And if I've got to marry I don't want to marry someone with pots of money and big houses to worry over. I'd like to marry someone who would expect me to make pie and yellow ruffled curtains for the kitchen windows, and who'd eat the pie, and . . ."

"And?"

She brought her gaze back to him. "I'm telling you a lot," she said.

"I'm enjoying it."

"Well, I'm being very rude. I'll stop. Come, Pourquoi, we must go."

The little dog came at his leisure, nosing about happily among the leaves on his way. David looked down at her. "Don't go," he begged. "I—don't go."

"I must." She moved away. "I suppose you haven't seen anyone about, a man, either last night or this morning, have you?"

"No. No one at all."

"It seems very queer. Danvers, one of the servants, is missing this morning. He has disappeared. Jackson and McQuittie have been searching for him all morning. They are nearly sure that he isn't on the island. And he can't possibly be off the island, because the gates and the boathouse were locked. He has just vanished.

"Of course . . . oh, it will turn out to be something perfectly simple, because everything is always simple and dull at Lost House. Although, this summer," she said, and stopped again, thinking. A line broke into the smooth whiteness of her forehead.

"Can I be of any assistance? If there is anything I can do I shall be only too glad."

"Thank you so much," she said politely, and was a thousand miles away from him again. "I must go," she said, and moved away. At the edge of the clearing she paused. "I suppose you're just passing through on a holiday?" she asked, glancing at Delilah and the pack saddle.

David nodded. He did not dare trust himself to speak.

"I hope you have a very pleasant time," she said, and moved on out of sight.

II

The Same;
8:25 A. M.

OUT of sight of the clearing Pamela executed a small skip and then stood silent on the rocky lake shore, gazing out over the water. She sighed. "He was a very nice boy, wasn't he, Pourquoi?" she inquired. Then, resolutely, she turned back at once toward the northern end of the lake and the stone causeway leading out to Lost House.

She put David Aylesworth out of her mind. He didn't belong there, any more than he belonged at Lost House, and she mustn't think about him. As a matter of fact, there were other things she ought to be thinking about, had deliberately come walking to think about. Talking to Doctor Aylesworth she had been momentarily tempted to tell him about them, to pour out the whole story and ask his opinion. Of course that was impossible, but it would have been pleasant to be able to do it. It was when he had said that he was a doctor that she had been most tempted. Because a doctor might be able to tell, when she described the sick man at Lost House, whether he was sick or not.

Having the sick man in the house, Pamela decided, was really what was giving her the queer feeling about everything at Lost House this summer. Silly, because he was probably exactly what he appeared to be. But the rest of the summer people weren't like those of other years, either. Usually there were more families, or—well, perhaps not exactly families, but people who seemed to belong together. This year there were, of course, the Lessingtons, and there was Mrs. Mainwaring and Sylvia, and Lady Revel and her son Lord Geoffrey.

Pamela made a wry face. Why couldn't Lord Geoffrey have been like Doctor Aylesworth? Well, he couldn't. A man like Doctor Aylesworth wouldn't be trailing around the world with his mother, doing nothing, wasting time, content to spend the whole summer swinging in hammocks and puttering about on the little golf course with a club and a ball.

Pamela reached the causeway and began to walk across it slowly, her hand on the railing, Pourquoi trotting reluctantly behind. Pourquoi liked the forest better than the trim grounds of Lost House.

"Nonsense," she told herself scoffingly, but the thought wouldn't go away. Lost House, she went on in her mind, was thoroughly stuffy, and nothing extraordinary happened there to dogs or to human beings, either, except in a person's imagination. Because one or two unusual little things had happened, because the guests seemed more—more isolated from each other than those of former years, one needn't imagine plots and mysteries. Every guest had come with heaps of references. Every guest had an excellent reason for coming. Shane Meredith, who went about with an anxious inward look on his face, singing under his breath at every possible opportunity, looking at his throat in every mirror, taking long sun baths in the afternoons—he was a not-too-famous tenor who'd had a bad attack of bronchitis, and had been sent here to get well.

Mr. Payne—he was James Harrod Payne on the backs of his books—was writing a novel. He was a funny little round man with an immense voice, and Pamela called him to herself "the booming robin." Mrs. Clarkson, the thin pale dark little woman in deep mourning, had lost her husband in the early spring and wanted to be somewhere far away from the world they had moved in together. And then, there was the Archdeacon.

Lady Montana had written about the Archdeacon, and she said he was tired and needed a rest. He did not look as if he needed a rest. He was an immense broad-shouldered man with thick white hair and a bristling military mustache. He had a red face and looked as if he were filled inside with steel springs. He spoke to no one unless it was necessary, and he sat like a large heavy cloud in the drawing room and at the table.

And Lady Montana had sent him. Lady Montana? Mr. Gifford, the sick man? And Danvers?

Oh, Danvers would be found by this time. To connect three such names, even vaguely, was foolish.

PAMELA swung in through the gates in the island walls and smiled at McQuittie, holding them open for her. "It's a lovely morning, McQuittie," she told him. "I don't believe we've had such a beautiful morning all summer."

"Umph," McQuittie replied.

He stood, regarding her in silence, waiting for her to come past the gates so that he could go about his important business.

"Did you find Danvers?" Pamela inquired.

"No," McQuittie said shortly, and it seemed to her that he gave her a momentary flicker of a glance out of his sharp cold eyes.

"No?" Pamela echoed, and stood looking at him. Some of the gold had faded suddenly from the sunshine. McQuittie turned away to the gates; Pamela went on up the steps to the house, slowly, hands in pockets, head bent. Pourquoi stayed outside with McQuittie. He was, for some queer dog-reason of his own, very fond of McQuittie, although McQuittie never seemed to pay him the slightest attention.

Jackson, in his short morning coat, stood sorting the letters at the table before the long window under the stairs. Pamela dropped down on the window seat and looked at him. "You didn't find Danvers?" she said.

"No, Miss Pamela," Jackson replied. His broad heavy face wore an anxious look which deepened at her question.

"You are positive he isn't on the island?"

"Absolutely positive, Miss Pamela. We've looked everywhere." Jackson was worried. Never before in all his years at Lost House had he looked as he did now. Jackson was always a tower of strength and reassurance. Pamela's heart sank as she looked at him.

"Could anything have happened to him?" And then, as Jackson did not answer, "Tell me what you think of it."

"Well," he replied after a moment, "I think he has gone away from Lost House of his own accord, and that he will not return. Danvers had an unpleasant way of looking at things, Miss Pamela. It would have seemed rather a joke to him that we should be so concerned over him. He has not been satisfied here for some time, and has been grumbling at being so cut off from his usual enjoyments. I would suggest that he is now in a train, having walked to Corbett, and on his way to Vancouver. He is possibly wishing that he could hear this very conversation and witness the search for himself."

"But—did he take his belongings?"

"No. But he had very few."

"Money? He is paid on the first of the month as everyone else is, isn't he? We owe him three weeks wages!"

Jackson hesitated. "I advanced him money only yesterday," he confessed. "He said he needed it to send to someone. A friend in difficulties, I took it. So nothing is owing him."

"Oh," Pamela said. Jackson's eyes were on the letters in his hand. "How did he get off the island?" Are any of the boats missing?"

"One could get out quite easily with a ladder, Miss Pamela. To scale the wall with a ladder would be simple, and he could then use the ladder as an improvised bridge when the drawbridge is lifted, as of course it was. The open span is only ten feet across."

"Oh," Pamela said again. Jackson didn't believe what he was saying. He was fidgetty. He didn't believe a word of it. He didn't know what had happened to Danvers, but he was afraid. And it wasn't like him to be afraid, or upset. He must —there must be something . . .

"Have you told mother?"

"Not yet, Miss Pamela."

She stood up. "I'll tell her," she decided. "I—yes, I'll tell her. Are those her letters?"

He handed her half a dozen envelopes and she started off toward the foot of the great curving staircase. She paused, turned swiftly and went into her mother's small sitting room at the end of the hall.

It was a pleasant room, with a rosewood sofa against the wall, two easy chairs drawn up before the fireplace and a large Jacobean desk standing before the window. Pamela sat down and opened an unlocked drawer. Here was her mother's correspondence. The business letters were in a separate file; but the letters from her friends in England lay here, tied carefully in neat bundles. Pamela fingered them over and selected a thick one. She untied the tape that held it and went swiftly through the released pile of letters. She went through them again. Then she sat for a moment thinking. She tied the bundle again, dropped it back into the drawer and began a systematic search of the papers in the tray on the desk and in the other drawers. Not a scrap of paper was out of place anywhere, but what she wanted could not be found. Finally she gave up, and went out past Jackson again and up to her mother's room.

SHE tapped lightly on the door, listened a moment to the unbroken stream of words that went on inside, opened the door quietly and slipped in. As was usual at this time of the morning, her mother sat against the piled-up pillows of her bed with her breakfast tray on the little table at her right and Mrs. Leach, the housekeeper, seated with a pad of paper in her hand at the window. They had apparently come to the end of the daily discussion, and Mrs. Leighton was adding the final touches.

She was a small woman, not much larger than Pamela herself, with beautiful heavy chestnut hair and exquisite skin. She looked as if she should have been kept in a glass case, her fragility and delicacy carefully protected from every breath. She was, in reality, about as helpless as a large army complete with banners. She was speaking now steadily in her clear decisive voice, and Mrs. Leach wrote steadily on her pad.

"Lamb," Mrs. Leighton was saying. "Lamb, mushrooms, fresh mint . . . no, McQuittie has some ready . . . and tell them we absolutely will not accept any of those pink strawberries they sent us last year. We can take our order somewhere else. Remind them. That's all, Mrs. Leach. No, just a minute. You'l better go and see Miss Lessington, I don't know which Miss Lessington, it doesn't matter. One of them broke her wrist watch strap when she first came and I keep forgetting. She wants another. And send Sellers to me at once."

Mrs. Leach rose, still scribbling on her pad. "Roquefort cheese," she said enigmatically.

"Good heavens, yes," Mrs. Leighton replied with understanding.

She turned to Pamela. "Good morning, dear," she said. "Been for a walk? Are those my letters?" She put out a hand. "You look very—" she stopped and called after Mrs. Leach's retreating figure. "Rye bread," she said. "That's what he wants with the Roquefort, I remember now." Mrs. Leach paused again. "Oh, go on, go on," Mrs. Leighton said crossly. "That's enough for today. Pamela, for Heaven's sake, don't fidget. Give me my letters. Is it a nice morning?"

"Mm," Pamela replied. She drew an appreciative finger-tip under her mother's chin. Mrs. Leighton glanced swiftly through the pile of letters. She selected one and tore it open. Her eyes traveled over the enclosure. She drew it down. "Nothing interesting," she said, dismissing it with the rest of the sheaf. "Where is Sellers? Did I or did I not—"

"She'll be here in a second," Pamela said placatingly. "You don't need her, mother. You already look perfectly marvelous."

"My hair is impossible," her mother contradicted flatly.

"Mother," Pamela said, and perched herself on the edge of the bed. "Mother, I'm afraid I've got bad news."

Mrs. Leighton's face paled. "Bad news?" she said sharply. Her eyes darkened.

"It's Danvers," Pamela said. "He's disappeared, mother. He simply isn't anywhere on the island."

"Disappeared?" Mrs. Leighton repeated. "Danvers? Disappeared? Who is Danvers? Oh, *Danvers!* Good gracious, Pam, you nearly frightened me to death! Do you need to make such an issue of it?"

"But, mother, he *has* disappeared. He's gone, and we don't know where, Jackson and McQuittie have searched the island for him, and he is gone. We know he was here as half past nine, because he was up mending Sylvie's window then, wasn't he? I mean, he was supposed to be off duty, but when she broke it he had to mend it. But nobody seems to have seen him since then. He's just vanished."

"NONSENSE," her mother replied. "He hasn't vanished. There's some perfectly simple explanation, Pam, and I don't want to be bothered about it. Let Jackson take care of it. Really, I have enough. I refuse to worry over an undergardener. I simply refuse. He is an adult and perfectly capable of taking care of himself. Good Heavens, from the way you looked and spoke I thought that Mr. Meredith had hanged himself or that it was Mrs. Clarkson who had disappeared. I mean, I shouldn't be surprised at either of those things happening. Such difficult people! But Danvers . . . really, Pam!"

"But he *is* missing," Pamela said obstinately. "Something will have to be done."

"I suppose you think we ought to send for the police? That would be very pleasant and sensible, wouldn't it? Danvers will come back in a day or two. He's gone off on some business of his own, probably. Jackson had better get rid of him. We can't have that sort of servant. Now, go on, Pam, and find Sellers. I must get myself out of bed and downstairs."

Pamela got off the bed and stood up. "Mother," she said, and stopped.

"Something else? Oh, dear."

"It's about Lady Montana's letter."

"Oh, *dear,*" Mrs. Leighton said in exasperation.

"I must remind you, mother. You know what she said. She said that above everything we must not let any stranger into Lost House. Didn't she? We must not let anyone come here we didn't know. Not for this whole summer."

"And why do you bring it up now?"

"Because, if Danvers is missing, we'll have to have someone to take his place."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Whoever takes his place will be a stranger. We are being forced to take a stranger into Lost House. Don't you see?"

Her mother stared at her. "Pamela, you have a strange yearning for the melodramatic."

"Perhaps I have. But—we have one stranger in Lost House already," she said with meaning.

Mrs. Leighton put her hand to her forehead and sank back against the pillows. "Go away," she said. "You've got another of those attacks, Pamela, and I can't stand them. I can't cope with them. If you mention Mr. Gifford to me again I shall scream. Go and talk to Doctor Mayhew about him, if you must talk about him. Go on.

"Why you think you know more about illness than Doctor Mayhew, is more than I can fathom. Doctor Mayhew says the man is desperately ill and in pain. Dreadful pain. Naturally, I believe him. A man desperately ill and in pain is not the sort of person Louise Montana is warning me against any more than a servant is.

"And," she finished, "I fully believe that Louise must have gone insane. Of course I was troubled when the letter first came, but now I can see that anyone with any common sense would refuse to take it seriously. Now go, Pamela, and tell Sellers I want her at once, this moment, no matter what she is doing. Then go down and have breakfast with Lord Geoffrey."

Pamela got off the bed and went to the

door. "Did you burn the letter?" she inquired.

"No, of course not," her mother replied wearily. "It's with the others in my desk. Go and read it again, do. But if you mention it to me once more I will not be answerable for my conduct. There's Sellers now. Let her in, Pam, and *go on!*"

Pamela went dutifully as her mother's maid entered the room. She crossed the hall to her own room, to wash her hands and face and run a comb through her curls. Then, still thoughtfully, she went downstairs to her mother's desk and, sitting before it, went again methodically through the bundle of letters in Lady Montana's sprawling inky handwriting. She went through all the letters in the drawer, and sorted very carefully the pile of papers on the desk. And her mother had been wrong. The letter was not there.

III

The Same;
9:30 A. M.

"GOOD morning," Pamela said brightly, and slid into her chair behind the coffee things before any of the three men at the breakfast table could help her. She smiled at them impartially. "I do hope you're being treated nicely," she said in her mother's best manner.

Lord Geoffrey slid languidly back into his chair. Mr. Payne beamed happily at Pamela.

"Your advent, Miss Pam," Shane Medeith said with a wave of his long white hand, "is the crowning touch of perfection." He put his elbow on the arm of his chair, propped his chin in his cupped palm, and regarded her appreciatively. Too appreciatively, Pamela decided with firmness. Mr. Meredith knew that he had beautiful eyes to regard people with, although Pamela thought privately that a wash-cloth with plenty of soap on it might disclose traces of exaggeration in the sloe-blackness of the lashes. Also, the memory of a twinkling brown gaze came to her, and Mr. Meredith looked more than ever theatrical and . . . oh, unimportant.

"Toast!" Mr. Payne cried, with the air of one who has just discovered a new continent. He seized the silver dish, removed the cover with a flourish and held it out to Pamela.

Shane Meredith disregarded the toast. He sat gazing dreamily through the wide plate-glass window. "Is this your usual summer weather?" he inquired. Pamela looked out at the clear sky.

"It does rain sometimes," she said honestly, "but I think it's even more beautiful when it does. Usually we have this clear quietness all summer."

"Very poetic," Lord Geoffrey murmured. It sounded like a deliberately offensive remark. "Do let me give you some coffee, Lord Geoffrey," Pamela said sweetly. "And won't you have some marmalade? It is really quite good. It has quince in it."

"No, thanks," Lord Geoffrey drawled. He sighed.

"I feel that I shall regain all that I have lost, in this marvelous place," Meredith said with conviction. "I feel new life surging in me already. If I thought I were strong enough I should like to get up to the top of one of these glorious hills and pour my heart out in song. Think of it! Nature's great amphitheatre to sing in and Nature herself to listen!"

"You wouldn't have any breath to pour out your heart by the time you got to the top," Lord Geoffrey reminded him. Pamela glanced at him sharply, but his face was as usual a blank, his eyes milky and expressionless. He sat relaxed and limp in his chair, his long legs sprawled out in front of him, his head resting against the chair back.

Meredith did not deign to reply, but a flicker of distaste went over his handsome face. Mr. Payne was grinning behind his hand. He coughed and straightened his face. He rose. "Have to get to work," he said with regret. "Heroine in difficulties. Left her there last night because I didn't know what to do with her." His

attention was caught by something he saw through the window, and he narrowed his eyes and looked intently. "A knight comes riding," he informed them. "He has no armor, but he has a very neat white charger."

PAMELA sprang from her chair and went to the window. David Aylesworth was riding over the long causeway toward Lost House. His hair glinted in the sunshine as he rode.

"Feller can ride," Lord Geoffrey muttered. Pamela was not listening.

McQuittie was working near the gates. He had seen the approaching rider. He opened the gates a little and waited. Doctor Aylesworth slipped off the white mare and stood at her head. Whatever he said caused McQuittie to move back quickly and open the gates for him, and he led Delilah in through them and up the drive toward the house, with McQuittie at his side. Pamela looked from his brown eager face to Lord Geoffrey's sleepy one. Lord Geoffrey was fingering his chin, looking as if he were almost in a daze.

"Who is he?" Meredith inquired of Pamela.

"Perhaps he's the Mounted Police in undress uniform," Lord Geoffrey offered, and turned.

"Why should he be the Mounted Police?" Meredith inquired.

"Oh, no reason," Lord Geoffrey said negligently. "Except that he's mounted." He turned to Pamela. "How about a little jaunt in a canoe?" he inquired, smoothing down his thin receding straw-colored hair. "Very pleasant day for jaunting, I should say."

Pamela looked at him, not seeing him at all. She heard what he said, but the words meant nothing. She was waiting for Jackson to appear in the doorway and call her. But he did not come. Then, after a long time, she heard her mother's clear voice from her own sitting room, and a low pleasant rumble in answer which was certainly David Aylesworth's. Pamela muttered something, dropped her napkin and went quickly out of the room and down the hall.

Jackson's broad back was toward Pamela just inside the doorway. She stopped, and he hid her from her mother, standing before her desk. But David, speaking to Mrs. Leighton, saw Pamela and turned a little toward her. His eyes were sober, and he made no gesture of recognition. He finished his sentence.

". . . so, since this was the only house nearby, I came to you to report. If you know nothing of him I will communicate with the Mounted Police, and then you need not be further concerned."

"Police!" Pamela felt her lips saying in a whisper. Jackson, before her, stood like a stone. Suddenly Pamela knew what had happened, what was happening. She pushed past Jackson and went to face her mother across the desk.

"Danvers!" she cried.

Mrs. Leighton was a little pale, but perfectly composed. "This is none of your affair, Pam."

"You may as well tell me!"

Mrs. Leighton lifted a hand and dropped it. "This gentleman has found the body of a man on the lake-shore, if you must know. Jackson, I suppose the only thing to do is for you to go and see if it is Danvers."

"It's Danvers, all right," Jackson said heavily, almost as if he didn't know what he was saying.

"You'd better go and make sure, Jackson."

"If it is," Jackson said after a moment. "He can't be brought to Lost House, madam."

Mrs. Leighton looked up, startled. "No. Oh—what shall we do?"

"I'd better take Doctor Mayhew with me. He can examine the body and so be in a position to give the certificate of death. Then we can take him to the village and leave him there until I get in touch with his people in Vancouver. The guests need not know, madam."

"I—yes, that's best, of course. Poor fellow. Do you suppose—he wasn't—"

Pamela looked at David. "Was he drowned?" she asked directly.

David hesitated. His hesitation brought three pair of eyes to rest on his face. "No," he said slowly. "I don't think he was."

"Not drowned?" Mrs. Leighton cried. "Then how—"

DAVID moved his hands. "It looks perhaps as if he had fallen and struck his head on the rocks, and then, later, somehow tumbled into the water. Your medical man will decide, I am sure, that the man was dead when his body went into the water."

He was queer. Intent, and—queer. He wasn't free as he had been this morning.

"Well," Mrs. Leighton said after a moment. She drew a deep breath. "Get Doctor Mayhew, then, Jackson. Break the news to him as gently as you can. It's all very unfortunate." She spoke to David. "Thank you very much for all your trouble," she said.

It was a dismissal. But David did not go. He tightened his jaw a little under the smooth cheek, and looked at her.

"Perhaps I can ride to Corbett and notify the police for you?" he suggested. "I shall be very glad to do so."

"The police?" Mrs. Leighton repeated, and frowned. Jackson moved ever so slightly beside Pamela. Mrs. Leighton went on. "I'm afraid I cannot see that this is a matter for the police," she said. "Is it?"

"The cause of his death," David said apologetically, but with firmness quite obvious behind his apology. "It isn't quite plain, you see."

"But we can't have the police at Lost House," she said miserably. "Surely it isn't necessary. Doctor Mayhew will be able to determine the cause of death, and whatever it is, it was accidental. So I do not see at all the reason for notifying the police."

"I'm sorry," David said after a moment. But it was not a withdrawal. "I'm afraid I shall have to consider it my duty to notify them," he said. "I am in the position of being the person who discovered the body, and although it is quite possible that the death was accidental. I'm sorry," he said again.

Jackson moved. "The gentleman is right, madam," he said.

"Good heavens," Mrs. Leighton ejaculated. "I don't see the necessity. The man is dead. We know he died accidentally. Nothing else is possible. He had no enemies. He was the most colorless and dull individual. There is no mystery about him or about his death. Must we then have the house filled with police officers, terrifying the guests and ruining everything? I can't see it. I can't."

David waited. His eyes were steady. Pamela watched him, watched Jackson, watched her mother's face.

"If you will pardon me, madam," Jackson said at last, "I think we should be wiser to notify the police, as the gentleman suggests. But I am wondering if it would not be possible to communicate directly with headquarters at Vancouver and ask them to send out a man in plain clothes. He can make the necessary investigation. It will be routine matter, I should think, and consist only of a consultation with Doctor Mayhew—and we need not inform the guests as to his true identity."

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Leighton said.

"And we can take the body to Dark Forest at once," Jackson finished. "As soon, that is, as Doctor Mayhew sees it."

"I suppose it's the only thing we can do," she agreed.

David's eyes were on her face. "I'm sorry to keep putting objections in the way," he said courteously. "But if you don't mind, I think I'll go along to Corbett and report the case there to the Mounted Police post. I'll tell them, of course, what you plan to do, and they can get in touch with headquarters. No doubt your plan will be thoroughly approved there, but I feel sure that the district police will need to be notified."

Mrs. Leighton flushed faintly. She

looked at Jackson. "How soon can we have a man here from Vancouver?" she asked him. "By tomorrow noon?"

"Yes, madam. If I wire at once."

She turned back to David. "I understand that you feel a certain responsibility in this matter and wish to make sure that it is taken care of properly," she said coldly. "But if you notify the local police they will come at once and make our precautions useless. Will you be my guest here at Lost House until tomorrow noon's train? If the man does not arrive from Vancouver headquarters, I will be glad to have you go to Corbett then, if you insist that the police are needed."

David hesitated, but only for a second. His lips were firm. "Very well," he said at last. "I think I can agree to that."

IV

The Same;
10:30 A. M.

DOCTOR MAYHEW stood up and looked across the sodden body at the three men who had been watching him. "No," he said slowly. "No, he wasn't drowned."

Jackson, standing beside David, drew a long breath. McQuittie did not move or make a sound. His small blue eyes flicked across Doctor Mayhew's face and down again to the body at his feet.

"How long has he been dead?" Jackson asked.

The old doctor lifted his eyes to David's. "What would you say, my boy? What is your opinion?"

David considered. "Twelve hours? I may be wrong."

"No," Doctor Mayhew said. "I think you are right. Twelve hours. Perhaps a little more."

Jackson glanced at the watch on his wrist. Nobody spoke.

"When was he last seen at Lost House?" David inquired.

Jackson did not answer. McQuittie spoke up gruffly. "He was down at the tool shed about half after nine," he said. "He was getting something to fix a window. A bit of glass, and some putty. But he didn't put the stuff back. I found it this mornin' beside the kitchen door."

Neither Doctor Mayhew nor Jackson seemed to be interested. McQuittie's words fell into a silence. Doctor Mayhew turned to survey the steep rocky sides of the hill behind them.

"I suppose," he said tentatively, "he must have fallen somewhere up on the hill, struck his head there as he fell and then slipped into the water. He couldn't have fallen into the water just here, but from that small promontory to the right it seems to me that he could have managed it."

"Is there any trail on the hill?" David inquired. "Doesn't it seem rather a strange place for a man to be in darkness?"

Doctor Mayhew looked at Jackson. "The trail to the old mine would be somewhere a few yards back from the ledge up there, would it not?"

Jackson did not reply. He was pondering something behind his expressionless eyes. "Would you be willing to give a death certificate under these circumstances, sir?" he asked Doctor Mayhew directly.

The old man hesitated. His thin aristocratic face was filled with concern. "It seems rather a pity to stir up a mare's nest over it," he said. "Mrs. Leighton has enough difficulty as it is. Those of us who knew Danvers"—he was addressing himself directly to David—"are convinced that this would never be suicide. The death is purely accidental. I think an explanation of the circumstances would be sufficient. Quite sufficient. After all, one has to exercise common sense in these matters. There is no advantage in troubling the authorities over a matter like this, bringing them out of their way, taking up their time. That is the way I look at the matter."

Jackson listened until Doctor Mayhew was through. He turned to David. "Would you be willing to agree with Doctor Mayhew?" he asked.

"His point of view is a very considerate one," David replied.

Doctor Mayhew passed a hand across his brow. "I am sure it is the best plan. It saves so much trouble. You are taking him to Dark Forest, Jackson? Yes, this is simpler. Much simpler."

David smiled. "I will explain the situation to the police at Corbett, then," he said cordially. "I am sure they will accept the explanation without question."

THERE was half a second of dead silence. Then Jackson spoke. "I think we had better carry out Mrs. Leighton's arrangement," he said shortly, and bent to help McQuittie lift the dead man into the row-boat.

In a few minutes he and McQuittie were rowing slowly up toward the mouth of the little smooth-flowing river that ran through the village of Dark Forest to empty into the lake. David and Doctor Mayhew were in the red canoe once again on their way back to Lost House. The old man sat silently against the cushions on the latticed seat while David paddled. He was so light that his weight made no burden. He was well past seventy, David decided, and not very strong. Perhaps it was characteristic of old men to want to take the easiest way, even if it wasn't the right way. Still—Doctor Mayhew's eyes were very keen and bright. He did not appear helpless and doddering by any means. He was looking at David now with a little smile across his fine mouth.

"I suppose," he said pleasantly, "you are what they call an incorruptible young man, are you not?"

For a moment David did not answer. Then, "Possibly," he said equably, and slid the canoe along the silky water.

"Incorruptible," Doctor Mayhew repeated. "And determined. And persistent. Or is that tautology?"

David did not reply. They were approaching the end of the island. The boathouse doors were open. David moved his paddle to the other side and sent the canoe through them. It came to rest against a low wharf built into the side of the boathouse.

For a moment Doctor Mayhew made no move to get out. He sat watching David. Then, "Ah, well," he said, with a kind of resignation in his tone, and clambered out awkwardly, as if his bones were brittle and his muscles stiff. He went up the stairs and opened the boathouse door to step out into the graveled path leading up to the house between the roses in the garden.

"Perhaps you will come up to my study," he said. "I should like very much to have a talk with you about all the new ideas in medicine. I have been out of the world a long time." He lifted his hand and indicated a row of windows stretching across the end of the rear wing facing them. A stone balcony lay across the wing beneath the windows, and a narrow curving flight of stone steps led up to it from the ground. Doctor Mayhew went on talking as David's eyes followed his gesture.

"We are so secure, here in Lost House," he explained. "We have high stone walls and a drawbridge that is lifted at sunset. We are not afraid of outer staircases and a lack of locks." He smiled, a swift puzzling smile. "There is no one in Lost House but ourselves and our guests," he said, "and no one can get in. No thieves can break in and steal. No evil can come to Lost House. We are secure."

David frowned, and followed reluctantly across the velvet grass toward the foot of Doctor Mayhew's stair. His eyes searched the wide lawns, the paths between the flowers, the shrubbery, and strove to penetrate the latticed and green-covered sides of a rose arbor in the distance; but he was rewarded with no glimpse of Pamela's small figure or shining bronze head. He couldn't ask for her.

As they went slowly up the steps David heard a door on the long balcony above them close sharply. He looked up and saw Pamela coming along the balcony.

She looked at Doctor Mayhew with concern as he reached her. "You look fagged," she said. "Was it dreadful?"

"Not dreadful," he said gently, and smiled down at her. "A little upsetting, perhaps. You have met Doctor Aylesworth, my child?"

"Yes," Pamela said with her quick smile. Her lips curved delicately. "I—that is, I thought I'd show him over the grounds. I'm sure he would like to see them."

Doctor Mayhew looked from Pamela to David. "Yes," he said with the ghost of a sigh. "I'm sure he would."

V

The Same; Inter.

THE four men had gone to the mainland to examine Danver's body. Mrs. Leighton had put the affair out of her mind as far as possible and set herself to work on the myriad details that had to be settled every morning if Lady Revel were to be amused in the afternoon by a gracious and care-free hostess. Pamela went slowly up to her own room, quite forgetting that she had not finished her breakfast.

She took off the brown corduroy skirt and jacket, and, standing in her brief knickers, fingered over the dresses on her hangers. Her clothes were perfect, but she never looked in at the long array in the dressing room without resentment. Her clothes were important. They had to be considered before the food, or the furniture, or even the servants' wages. For they were her stock-in-trade, which she was to use to attract somebody like Lord Geoffrey. Oh, one might as well admit it, Lord Geoffrey himself.

For the last two years her clothes had been simply exquisite. That was because her mother was so far-sighted. It wasn't that she wanted Pamela to marry for a year or two, perhaps, but she had always hoped that someone like Lady Montana, who was her best friend, would go back to England and talk about the lovely child who was growing up in the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains, and then some very rich and romantic young man would hear about the lovely child and go to see her when she was grown.

Pamela made a face at herself in the mirror and jerked the tangles out of her hair viciously.

She shut the door of her room and stood irresolute in the hall, wondering whether she dared go out on the rear balcony from where she could watch the mainland. Some of the other guests might see her. Mrs. Clarkson from her window might see her and look over to the mainland herself, and perhaps poor Danvers was in plain sight . . . Mrs. Clarkson would have another heart attack . . . or Lady Revel might come along with her lorgnette and survey the strange party on the mainland as carefully as she surveyed Pamela a dozen times a day. No, it wouldn't do. Much better to go down into the garden and wait in the rose-arbor.

Just at the head of the stairs she was stopped by a loud whisper floating down the hall behind her. "Pamela!" she heard. "Pamela!"

She turned. A fluffy white head was visible against a dark door across the corridor. Two bright eyes sparkled at her compellingly. "Pamela, come here!" Miss Lessington said. Pamela, impressed by the air of conspiracy, tiptoed over the velvet carpet to the door. It was flung wide. She stepped through, and the door was instantly closed behind her.

SHE was facing Miss Jane and Miss Josephine Lessington, one at the window, knitting in a low chair, the other in the middle of the floor. Nobody could possibly tell which was which. They had identically the same fluffy white hair and clear gray eyes, the same faint pink in their cheeks, the same delicately red lips and soft creamy skin. They made Pamela think of two nosegays of mignonette and lavender and rosemary picked in an old fashioned garden at twilight. At the moment their expressions were quite dissimilar, but Pamela didn't know which was which. "What is it?" she inquired, look-

ing from one to the other. "Has something happened?" She found herself whispering.

The twin who sat beside the window looked up with a stiff disapproving air. She clicked her needles furiously along the row of her pale gray afghan. Her sister's cheeks were pink. Her eyes sparkled, and her lips were parted with breathless excitement.

"Pamela," she said abruptly, "we are living in the very core of a mystery story!"

"Nonsense, Josie," her sister snapped. She jerked her ball of wool. "You needn't say 'we.' I'm not living in a mystery story, although I'm beginning to wonder if I'm not closely associated with a potential lunatic."

"Now, Jennie," Miss Josie remonstrated. "You know you're as excited as I am, but you think it's beneath your dignity to show it. And if I were you I'd pick up those two stitches you just dropped."

"Well, really," Miss Jennie muttered, turning pink. She bent her head closely over her work. Miss Josie smiled wickedly at Pamela. "Sit down, my dear," she begged. "I simply must tell you what has happened. I simply must tell someone, and I don't think I feel quite as free with your mother as with you. Who knows what awful tragedy might be averted by my speaking in time! Of course, if it were the sort of mystery story that contains horrid murders, and that sort of unpleasantness, I should not dream of telling you. Not for a moment. But it isn't, and—"

"Oh, *do* tell me," Pamela cried.

"Well," Miss Josie said, sitting down opposite Pamela and folding her hands in her lap, "I will. My dear, it began the moment we left England!"

Miss Jennie raised her head. "Fiddle," she said sharply. But Miss Josie looked at her and went on with calmness.

"Last night," she said, "these rooms were entered while we were at dinner, and every inch of our belongings ransacked. Searched. I am sure of it. Among other things, my handkerchief box was not in order this morning. My bath-powder looks as if it had been stirred right to the bottom with a spoon."

"Why should your rooms be entered and searched?" Pamela asked inattentively after a moment.

"Oh, my dear girl," Miss Josie said penitently, at sight of Pamela's face, "I wasn't complaining, you know. Don't feel badly, Pamela. It has nothing to do with Lost House. I told you that it began in England." She paused. "Did you notice that the Archdeacon didn't go down to dinner last night?" she asked.

MISS JENNIE took off her gold spectacles and turned to Pamela. "Don't listen to her," she commanded. "The Archdeacon was asleep when we went down to dinner. He was snoring, audibly. He was still snoring when we came up. I don't pretend to know anything of these things, nor even to be interested in them, but I feel sure that if the Archdeacon had intended to search our rooms, or if he searched our rooms, he would not have snored so elaborately. It would betray a lack of finesse, and be as foolish as an ostrich putting its head into the sand. Josie, you are being ridiculous, and I think it is time you stopped."

"I am not being ridiculous," Miss Josie contradicted. "That man followed us from England, Jennie, and you know it. There were thousands and thousands of passengers on our boat, and yet which one out of them all was always falling over our deck chairs and stumbling down our corridor and just happening to be around the corner when we were talking quietly together? The Archdeacon, of course.

"Such a nice pleasant face, and yet I am sure that he is no more an Archdeacon than I am! Archfiend, I should be willing to call him. And then, after following us across the ocean and the continent, he actually gets off the train with us at Dark Forest, and comes to Lost House, and has the room across the hall. It is *too*

much. I have always been suspicious of coincidence, and I always shall be."

"But," Pamela objected, "it could be simply coincidence, Miss Josie. The Archdeacon wrote in February about coming to Lost House. Lady Montana recommended him herself. And if he happened to come on your boat he would be almost sure to have the same connections across the continent, too, wouldn't he?"

"Very well," Miss Josie said with dignity. "But he *was* underfoot the whole way. How do you explain that?"

"He's shy," Pamela suggested. "And someone had told him that you were coming to Lost House—someone in England—and he hadn't met you, but he was lonely, perhaps—he looks like a lonely person—and he kept trying to make your acquaintance on the boat."

"Thoroughly reasonable," Miss Jennie said with satisfaction.

She bobbed her white head.

"Is it?" her sister demanded. "Then why did he search these rooms last night?"

"Oh, dear," Pamela said, with a hand at her temple. "I do think you must be mistaken. And, even if it had happened, it couldn't have been the Archdeacon. He said he went to sleep and slept right through the dinner hour, Miss Josie. It couldn't have been the Archdeacon. He wouldn't do such a thing."

"Of course he wouldn't," Miss Jennie said. "It's her imagination, Pamela. She always had an unbridled imagination. It caused poor father no end of trouble. If he could hear her talking now he would send and insist that we come back to Little Dene at once, and he would have them put Josie to bed with ice-bags on her head."

"Go on, Jennie," Miss Josie said haughtily. "Tell all the family secrets. Talk all you like, but the fact remains that I have the proof in my own hands. That man watched us every foot of the way from London. Last night during dinner someone came into these rooms and searched my personal belongings, why, I cannot even begin to guess. And," she finished, "I suppose I imagine the mysterious note that came yesterday?"

"Mysterious note?" Pamela said faintly.

Miss Josie reached for her embroidered bag on the desk beside her. She opened it and withdrew an envelope.

"The note came in this envelope," she said. "I noticed the envelope at once, for I received one identically like it last week from the people in London who have always supplied us with books. I was surprised to receive a second letter from them so quickly. I opened the envelope, and this is what I found. A note which has obviously nothing to do with them. It was not signed.

Pamela took the note dazedly and held it in her hand.

"Did you have this in your bag at dinner time?" she asked.

"I thought of that too," Miss Josie said proudly. "Yes, I did. It wasn't in the room when it was searched."

"Oh, dear," Pamela said under her breath. She rose with the note in her hand and stared out at the garden. "I don't understand at all," she said.

"For goodness sake don't let it worry you," Miss Jennie told her. "It can't be important."

Pamela thought of Danvers, who was dead. Death was important.

The door of the boathouse at the bottom of the island opened, and two figures came into view. Doctor Mayhew moved with quick short steps, But David walked with a long swinging free stride. Pamela came to a sudden decision. She turned.

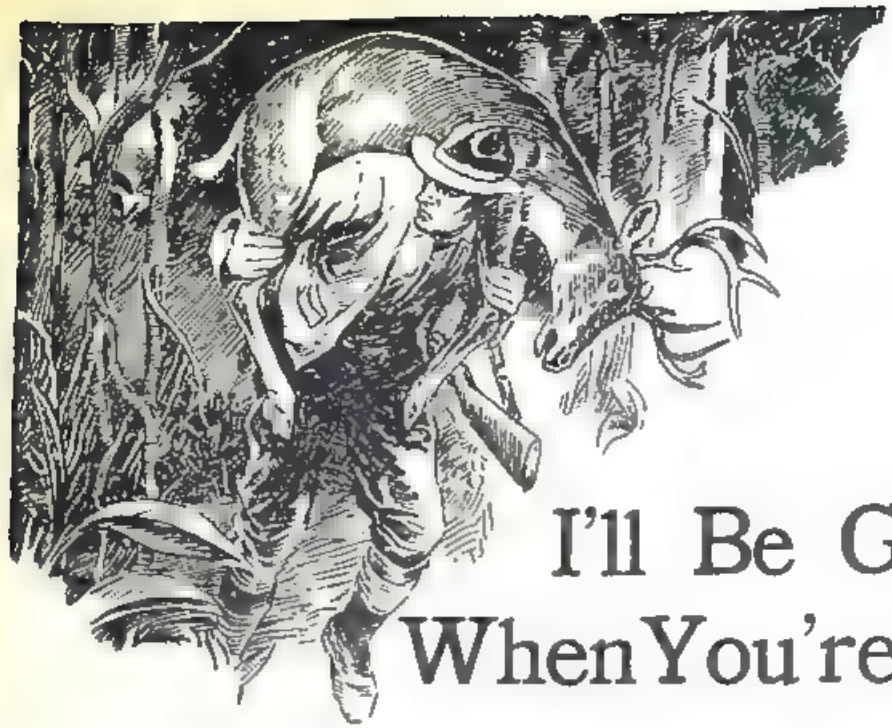
"May I keep this for a little while?" she asked. "I'll bring it back to you, Miss Josie."

"Burn it," Miss Jennie said. "It's absolute nonsense."

"Oh, no! You won't burn it, Pamela?"

"No," Pamela said from the door. "I won't burn it, Miss Josie."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



He hurried through the swamp

I'll Be Glad When You're Dead

This is the autobiography of a roving cadaver—the most bizarre and startling short story of the year

By HOWARD RIGSBY

Author of "Dealings with Arabs," etc.

LIVE and walkin' I war runty, but ask anybody and they'll tell you there war no tougher man to be found in all Florida. From the time I war coltish I war stringy, but them what tried to whup me allus vowed they'd sight rather tangle with a 'gator 'cause they war easier hurted than Joe Root—that's me, or what is left of me, what with shootin', drownin', buryin', burnin', and sech.

For sixty year I lived over on the west coast and war a game warden for twenty of 'em and I know every swampy piece and piney stretch and bayou from Port Saint Joe to Pensacola. I can tell you to the minute when the young quail'll hatch out and lookin' at a deer track I can tell you where he's goin' and what he's thinkin'. I fought and et and hunted bear and panther and wild boar and they has fought me and some has tried eatin' me. I can call out so's you'd think it war a loony bird and I know all the leaves and herbs and grasses that is good for what ails you. Rattlers and moccasins bit me so much that after while they paid me no mind 'cause they knowed that all their pisen couldn't hurt me. No sir, it war no critter got me here where I be, lyin' in the ground, it war a man, and of all the onery varmints and belly crawlers in God's world he war that most low-down of the lot.

It war in March and I come at night, workin' up the spits and islands, up from Panama City. There war a moon and the gulf war quiet and shinin' like clean steel and, when I cut the motor of my launch, shorewards I heered the cats pacin' in the bresh and the deer movin' through the palmettoes up towards the springs which is on the long key that stretches out into the Choctawhatchee Bay. It war all so purty and quiet that I almost fergit what I come for. Then back in the bresh I heered a gun. There war two shots and

I knowed right off it war a 12-gauge pump. That war real suspectful 'cause there ain't a passel of pumpers 'mong the county folks and it war ten year since I knowed of a person livin' up that way where the shots come from. It war no jackin' gang I figgered 'cause I knowed they'd been workin' the springs on the key. They had a fast boat which they run up in and they'd settle in the scrub there and shine their light when the deer war drinkin'.

Well, I set there with the gulf slappin' gentle 'gainst the boat and figgered a spell, listenin', and then I headed up to where a bayou cut in that'd take me to where them shots come from.

I rowed easy up the bayou with my 30-30 'crost my knees and it war dark with the cypress meetin' overhead and trailin' mossy streamers down into the boat. I heered 'gators rollin' off the bank and sighin' and their eyes shined at me. About two miles up the bayou I seen the light. It war in the cabin where nobody lived since ole man Jackson died in it ten year before. I set there a thinkin' on it and driftin' over toward the landin' that war all rotted and then I seen the boat layin' there covered with a tarp. I edged up 'long her and she war a nice cruiser, all mahogany and fitted out with brass and I bet as fast as anythin' on the whole gulf. It war too nice for any jacker boat and I seen no reason for it bein' there. But it war my duty to see who fired them shots. There war a little patch of cleared land near the cabin which war a fine-lookin' place for a man with a 12-gauge pumper to pick off a deer when it come up in the moonlight to kick 'mong the ole turnip and potato beds and graze on the wild hay that war sproutin' there.

I TIED my boat to a gleamin' deck cleat on the cruiser's bow and got out on the landin' and a rotted board cracked like a rifle shot under my foot. The door of the cabin swung open sudden and a man stood there sightin' out. There war a huntin' knife in his one hand and the other war jammed into his pocket.

"Who's there?" he hollered and I knowed right off it war a Yankee.

"Steady," I tole him. "Ain't no cause for alarmin'."

His eyes foun' me and he seemed to relax. "What you want?"

I begun walkin' up to the door of the cabin. When I war near up to him I said, "I want that buck deer yore makin' sech a mess of skinin' in there."

He war a big man, built like a bear, with long thick arms and black as a bear. "Now is that a nice way to ask for a thing?" he said. "And you been peekin'. How you know I shot a buck deer? And how you knowin' I never before skinned one?"

How I knowed war real simple. First off I could smell fresh-kilt deer and buck smells stronger than doe. And I knowed he war makin' a mess 'cause iffen he bled the critter proper there war no need for him to git a speck of blood on his hands, but his hands war all blood.

"Never mind how I come to know," I said. "I'm a game warden and you and that buck deer is comin' with me."

He laughed. "Why I thought you was only beggin' for a piece of it. Come in, Mister Warden, and tell me what's the rap." Then he got a bottle and two glasses and tole me to set and have a drink.

I war needin' a drink, I war right hongry for one, but I war not drinkin' no liquor with him. "You better pack yore fixin's," I tole him sharp. "I aim to tote you and that deer over there on the table back to Panama City tonight."

He taken a drink. "You mean to say you can't kill no deer in Florida?" he said jest like he war being real polite, but he war really mean and funnin' underneath.

"We got a season," I tole him steady, "jest like whatever state you may be t'home in, mister, and them that kills out of season pays a hundred dollars fine and goes to jail for a piece to boot."

"But between us there won't be no trouble," he said. "I didn't know your rules, Mister Game Warden, but I always

pay when I done wrong." He pulled a roll of bills on me then and it war bigger money and more of it than I ever seen. He tooken two bills off from the roll. "Here," he said, "is your fine and another century for yourself."

"Put yore money in yore pants."

Still starin' at me with them little varmint eyes he war peelin' off more bills. "You can tell me when to stop," he said.

I said, "You can stop now. Yore money won't buy that buck deer you kilt, er me, er the Florida law. Now bundle yore traps, mister, and come along with me."

He put his money away and laughed downright insultin'. "I have bought bigger men than you, and I have bought more law than all you got." He moved sudden then, like a rattler strikin', and grabbed the barrel of my 30-30. "And bigger men than you has come to take me," he said. "But I ain't gone with 'em."

I war careless I admit. I shouldn't a took no more chanct with him than I would of with a he bear in matin' time. But most men caught for killin' a buck deer won't go to fightin' desperate. They'll gen'ly try to buy off but they won't go to tanglin' with guns.

"Yore makin' a mistake," I tole him. "There ain't no pint-sized cracker game warden can take me in."

I said, "I'm a deppity, too. And I taken bigger men than you. Some I had to bloody up, but I taken 'em."

The hand that war sunk in his pocket come out slow with a nasty little gun in it. "Won't be no blood this time unless it's your own," he said. "Now sit down and we'll talk this over like sensible men."

He had me and I war boilin'. I had made a mistake and I had a feelin' even then that maybe it war the kind of a mistake a man don't git a chanct to make more'n once in a lifetime. And when I dived for him and heered that nasty little gun roarin' in my ears I knowed it.

I GOT it in the belly and I got it bad, but it taken more'n a little pop-gun like what he had to stop Joe Root. I rasseled with him for my own gun which he war still holdin' with one hand on the barrel.

"Ain't you a tough little banty," he muttered and he war grinin' with a deadly pisen grin.

The little gun went off ag'in and my left side turned all numbed from where I gotten it in the shoulder. I let go rasselin' for my own gun sudden and I slammed him and knocked him back so his next shot war wild and then I war a-comin' at him and I seen fear in his eyes then.

He gotten me good as I closed with him and I could feel the bullet gnawin' at the gristle in my chest, but I had got my hands on him now and he let out a scream and clubbed me on the head with the gun and each time he hit me he war cryin', "Go down! Go down! Ain't you human? Go down! You're dead!"

Then he slammed two more shots into me and pushed me away and he war like a crazy man now when I come back and started to choke him. But after a bit I begin to feel I war dead and the hand I war chokin' him with wouldn't hold no more and I slid down to his feet. But my eyes war open and I war a starin' up at him accusin' and my arm war wrapped tight around his feet.

His breath war comin' hard and he war sort of moanin' and he stared down at me and there war fear of me in his eyes. He tried to walk and get away from me but my arm war like iron 'round his legs and fin'ly he had to bend down and club at it with his gun to get loose. He taken a drink then and collected his self together a little bit.

"You was the toughest guy I ever kilt," he said. "Even big Tony wasn't half as hard, and all the others . . ." He stopped and taken another drink and looked down at where I war starin' at him with my bloody lips drawn back grinnin'. And he tried to laugh but it war shaky and not mirthful. "A skinny little old string-bean like you," he went on. "Me—Mike Mitchell—almost gettin'

dragged to a jail by a little old cracker game warden, and for just killin' a deer, a lousy little deer. Why I can see them headlines they would of had up north." He taken another drink. "Well there won't be no headlines now, 'cause I got you—you tough little old rooster you. Hey!—quit starin' at me! You got no right to stare and grin at people. You're dead! Don't you know it?"

I gurgle in my throat and he jumps straight up and drops the glass he war holdin'. His eyes war wide and startin' and he said feverish, "I'm goin' to get rid of you right now. I'm goin' to get you out of here. I'm goin' to sink you in the water so's you'll know you're dead, and I'll know it, too. And there ain't no one will ever find you."

He taken me by the heels and I war dragged out of the cabin and down to the ole landin'. He gotten rope from his cruiser and trussed me up real awkward then he gotten him some stone and a rusty ole iron plowshare ole man Jackson use to have. He tied these to me and dumped me in my boat.

I war towed behind that shiny cruiser out into Choctawhatchee and there I war dumped and my launch set adriftin' and as he spilled me into the water that big black Yankee said, "Goodbye, old rooster." But as I went my lips war pulled back in a tight grin and my eyes war starin' at him so he let me go quick. Then I went down into that water I knowed all my life with the fishes scuttlin' out of my way and the ole moon shinin' down on my face and the shadder of the cruiser's bottom moved over me with a noise like soft thunder in another world and I war restin' in the silt, rockin' easy in the warm ole arms of the Gulf. But I war not happy body for my job war not yet done.

ROCKIN' there while the moon shined down through the water and the fishes played in the weavin' bottom grass, the ropes what tied my legs war rubbin', rubbin' as I rocked, rubbin' on ole man Jackson's plowshare. By mornin' I war a free body, movin' and driftin' about under the water with on'y a rock or two still trailin' on my ropes. Now the water war all light inside with the sun and the tide war flowin' up the little bayou and I went twistin' and driftin' 'long with it. It war a real nice day, and different, for the teal and mallard war a-lookin' down through the water at me quizzical and I seen the roots of the cypress 'stead of their tops, as usual.

Goin' up the bayou an ole gran'pa 'gator bumped 'longside of me and looked me over, but I guess he seen I war ole, too, and no tender morsel and he on'y flapped his jaws disdainful. He come down on the rope, silly critter, and swum off with it, not even knowin' he had it, and as the rope unwinded from me I war twisted and turned and then, s'prisin' quick, I war floatin' spang on top of the bayou right next to ole man Jackson's landin'.

I laid floatin' in the sun and the grin war froze for good now on my face and my eyes war starin' toward the cabin. Smoke war comin' from the chimney and after a bit the Yankee come out and looked around. Sudden he stiffened and, shadin' his eyes, he come edgin' down toward the landin'. And when he seen it war really me he begun to shake and sort of moan. Then he whupped out his little gun what done for me and started firin' wild and silly at me.

He quit that in a minute and calmed down. He gotten in his cruiser and let her drift over to where I war floatin', beginin' to swell a bit, and taken holt my coat with a gaff.

"How come you got loose?" he asked me. "Why didn't you stay put? Can't you leave me be? Quit starin'!"

I kept right on starin' when he drug me into the boat, and as he paddled over to the landin' he war mutterin', "I'll get rid of you. I'm goin' to bury you, and then there won't be no doubt in any body's mind but what you're dead."

And, shore nuff, that war what he done to me next. He drug me back into the

palmettoes where there war a swampy piece and he digged a bit and then he put me in the muddy hole.

"There," said he, shovelin' muck on me, "this is the last I'll see of you. You won't stare and grin at me no more, you old monkey. This here is a grave and you're in it, so you are dead."

It was mighty dark, and wet too, and after a bit I could feel the blind little critters in the ground with me, a movin' and a pushin' at me, wonderin' who I war and how I come to be there. Most any other body, done up and shot through and drownded as I war, would of been right satisfied to rest there. But I war not. I war no peaceful body 'cause my job war not yet done.

There war no sech thing as time in that dark and body had no way of knowin' how long it had been there. It might been years and it might of been a hour when I heered a noise like horses on a road a long ways off. And soon the sound come closer and the swamp begun a movin' and a shakin' over me. Then somethin' tugged on me and there war a snortin' and a gruntin'.

It war wild hogs and purty soon they got me most out of the swamp, snortin' and fightin' over me. But it were mostly a game with 'em. I war too tough and stringy for any critter, even pigs, to think of eatin' and after a bit them hogs galloped off, leavin' me head and shoulders out of the swamp, starin' and grinnin' toward ole man Jackson's cabin which war just beginin' to show as the ground mist war liftin' and the sun comin' up.

IT WAR another purty mornin'. Over in the bresh a buck deer sniffed and wrinkled up his nose and then went gallivantin' off a-flauntin' his tail. And for a spell a possum set up in a pine tree a-watchin' and thinkin' me over.

The first buzzard come along to investigate about ten o'clock. He moseyed around in big circles, cagey and ready to go, but when he seen I war never goin' nowhere nor do nobody hurt he come down gradual on a hummock near me. Soon as he sets there war a dozen of his brethern come from nowhere and begun circlin' me, takin' council. And it war about that time that the door of the cabin opened and the Yankee come out with a axe, walkin' up toward the scrub to cut his self some wood.

When he seen the buzzards he stopped sudden and purty soon he come walkin' toward me slow and as he come closer I seen his eyes war blood-shot and wild like a man with hants who war drinkin' and not sleepin' nights. The buzzards leaved and went flappin' up and then the Yankee seen me pokin' up out of the swamp, starin' and grinin', and his face went as pale as if he war the hant and not me.

He stood there shakin' and starin' back at me and little bubbles come to his lips, just like a deer which the houn's has runned most to death. Then sudden he turnt away and went over to a old pitch pine log and begun to hack him pieces offen it with his axe. When he gotten a lot he taken the load down back of the cabin to a dry spot. Then he come back to where I war.

"You won't stay buried and you won't stay drownded," he tole me feverish. "Maybe you'll stay burnt up!"

Then he taken me and he drug me down to that stack of pitch pine and he war laughin' like mad as he done it.

I war awful wet from the water and the muck and the fire couldn't make no real headway on me, but I steam a lot and I sizzle and pop and as the wood burnt out the stack shifts and sudden I rolt off right to his feet and laid there lookin' up at him. And he screamed out so that every critter in the bresh for miles war shocked and quiet.

"Go away from me!" he tole me, blubberin' like a woman. "You ain't dead. Get up and walk and go away. I didn't go to kill you—honest."

It war quite a spell that time before he let off shakin' and blubberin' and then he went to the cabin and come out in a minute drinkin' from a bottle. He war a

bit more brashy now. "You ain't goin' to scare me," he said, "dead or alive. And there ain't none of your cracker friends goin' to come here and find you. I'm goin' to get rid of you again and this time you are goin' to stay dead like a kilt man should." Then he drug me back down to his boat and put me aboard. "The sharks'll eat you," he tole me, "'cause they'll eat anything, and we're goin' to go find us some."

We come out into the Choctawhatchee roarin' but when the Yankee seen the boat on the other side of the key he throttled down. Leavin' the cruiser idle along he come and hove me into one of the lockers that run along the sides and which had cushions on the lids for settin'. I war swelled up some and it war all he could do to stuff me into the locker and when he got me there the lid wouldn't quite close. He left me there and went back to the wheel and I heered him cuss and say, "Now what do they want?"

I knowed what they war wantin' 'cause I had seen that other boat belonged to ole Dan Meade, Sheriff of Choctawhatchee County, and my ole partner in the warden business, Goose Winters, war with him. They had found my launch floatin' empty and they war out a lookin' for me.

But there I war, stuffed helpless in a locker and like as not they'd on'y hail the Yankee and ask had he seen me. And, shore nuff, after a bit Dan Meade called out and tole us to heave to. And then there war the scrape of his boat 'long side.

"I'm in a hurry," the Yankee tole him.

Sheriff Meade cleared his throat out and I heered him spit. "You all got a fine boat here," he said. " A mighty nice boat for a man what's in a hurry. Where might you be hurryin'?"

"That's my business."

"Well, it's mine, too," Meade said and there war a pause while I could tell he war showin' off his star. "I'll jest take a look at yore licenses for this little ole hurry boat, iffen you don't mind."

THEN the cruiser swayed and Dan Meade come aboard and there war nothin' I could do, layin' there helpless and him so clost and no way to tell him 'bout what had happened. He walked right past me into the little cabin and I heered Goose who stayed in the launch say, "Some critter been doin' a sight of bleedin' 'round you, feller."

The Yankee said, "It's just from a—from a rabbit I kilt."

"He must of put up a purty good fight," Goose said. "A real tough little rabbit, war he?"

Then Sheriff Meade come out of the cabin and the Yankee asked him, "You satisfied, Mister Sheriff?"

Meade said nothin'. He war standin' right over where I be in the locker and after a bit he says slow, "You smell somethin', Goose?"

I heered Goose sniff. "Well I say I do," he said. "Our friend here in this hurry boat war tellin' me about a tough rabbit what he kilt. Maybe he got hit 'round here somewhere."

"That so," Meade remarked real cordial. "Well I would of sworn it war tough but no rabbit. Tell me about it, friend, whilst I set and smoke a minute."

There war a real frightenin' cry from the Yankee then and first thing I know the sheriff has set down on top of the locker, squashin' me down and in my swole condition it war not endurable.

"What you go shoutin' like that for?" the sheriff asked the Yankee.

I could almost hear him thinkin' fast and then he come out with a long story of how his own brother war took sick and dyin' down in Key West and he war in a terrible hurry to get down there and his voice war so nervous and shaky that I guess he made it seem like the truth to the sheriff.

"Well I don't want to holt no man goin' to his dyin' brother," the sheriff said and he moves his legs like he war goin' to git up and I war right sick with my own helplessness to tell him I war there right under where he war settin'

and that the Yankee war lyin'. I seen I would never have no peace now and would end up in a shark's belly with my job not done and the Yankee goin' off unhurted by law or man for killin' that buck deer.

"Well I sure thank you," the Yankee said, real smooth now, "and when I get to my brother I'm goin' to tell him how nice you were to me and I know it will make him get well."

"Well now," the sheriff said, sort of embarrassed. "Shucks, friend, I on'y done my duty. But that is a beautiful thought. It's a real purty sediment and I hope yore brother does git well and good."

"Hit's purty but it don't change the way this boat smells," Goose said.

His nose went sniff.

"Well I can't holt a man for a bad smell," the sheriff said. "We'll be goin'."

He got up offen me and when he did all my hope of salvation went with him. I wanted bad to tell him the smell war me, but there war nothin' I could do and it war bad to know he war shakin' that Yankee's hand. Then, just as the sheriff war climbin' over the side somethin' happened that war as big a surprise to me as it war to any body else.

When the sheriff got his self up off that locker it had relieved me a lot and now I heered a long windy sigh and it war me and I never heered a gladder sound.

For jest a spell there war a silence on the Choctawhatchee and you could hear the birds callin' way back up in the bresh and then they war so much sudden movin' about and hollerin' that I thought the cruiser would go plumb to the bottom.

Fin'ly it calmed a bit and the Yankee war blubberin' ag'in. "Don't open it," he war beggin'. "Please don't open it. He'll be layin' there laughin' at me and lookin' with them eyes. I'll talk. I'll tell you about everything. I'm Mike Mitchell and I kilt Tony Ginelli and I did that job at the Unity Bank. You can send me north or put me in jail, but please don't open it now."

Sheriff Meade paid him no mind. He opened the locker and, like Mister Mitchell said, I war layin' there grinnin' and starin', but I war a peaceful body now for my job war done. Mister Mitchell covered up his face with his hands whilst Dan Meade and ole Goose looked down at me.

"How do, Joe," Goose said before he seen for sure I couldn't answer.

"Why there war no need to confess all them things, Mister Mitchell," Sheriff Meade said after a bit. "You done the biggest killin' you'll ever do right here. And there won't be no need to send you north. We'll handle you, friend. And jest to make shore you don't git away whilst we .tows you back to town, I'm goin' to chain you right to this here locker where ole Joe Root can keep his eyes on you."

ANNOUNCING

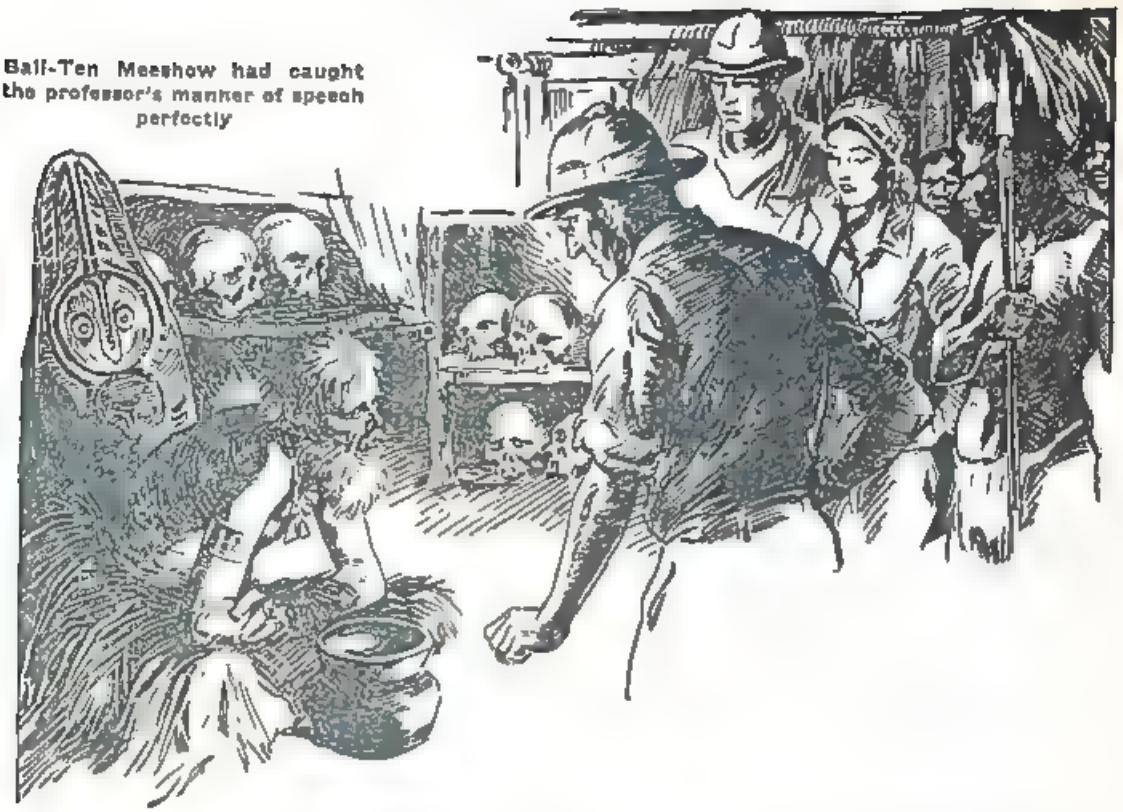
THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN HORNBLOWER

IN

BEAT TO QUARTERS

By C. S. FORESTER

Beginning in the Argosy for September 17



Bali-Ten Meeshow had caught the professor's manner of speech perfectly

Midas of the Mountain

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

Begin now this exciting story of South Pacific adventure

IN 1894 Pierre-Etienne Michaud, a young man of deceptively mild appearance, was sentenced for murder and shipped to the island of Nouméa in the South Pacific. Compared with Nouméa, Devil's Isand is an ideal vacation resort; and while Michaud's criminal companions were certainly no more dangerous or vicious than himself, he was not happy with them. So, some two years later, he managed to escape. It was known that three men had been murdered, but there was no trace of Pierre-Etienne Michaud and finally he was put down as dead. . . .

In 1938 Burton Chinnery, an American air pilot, is broke in New Guinea. He is so broke that he jumps at the chance to pilot Professor Edward McAvoy Reeves and his niece to Port Moresby—tough trip though it is. And when he has had a glimpse of Stephanie Reeves' green eyes, he is even more anxious to get the job.

That flight is comparatively brief—and disastrous. Burt Chinnery strikes an electric storm not far from Mount Lawson, and before he can turn back, the plane crashes. Chinnery regains his senses to find that they are in the midst of the jungle, and that Dr. Reeves' leg is broken. Through that first terrible night the professor suffers in silence and Stephanie shows an astonishing amount of quiet courage. But morning brings another shock; when Burt goes to investigate the wrecked plane, he finds it has disappeared.

IMMEDIATELY he suspects that somehow it has been removed by the Kuku-Kukus, a savage tribe of headhunters who wander the Guinea jungle. All too quickly his suspicions are confirmed. Burt, Stephanie and the professor are suddenly and silently surrounded by a party of these dwarfed,

This story began in last week's Argosy

evil-faced savages, taken prisoners and carried off to the Kuku-Kuku village.

There Burt Chinnery is brought before the tribal ruler, called Ball-Ten Meeshow, and discovers with amazement that this is no pot-bellied savage, but an aged, bearded white man who speaks French and English. Then Ball-Ten Meeshow of the strangely cruel face tells his story—the story of Pierre-Etienne Michaud, fugitive from justice who has spent forty years in the jungle. . . .

CHAPTER V

LANGUAGE LESSONS

EDWARD McAVOY REEVES lay in a corner of the hut, cursing aloud, in spite of the presence of his niece, who had her fingers in her ears. It was because they were "punishing" the pygmy.

"The swine! If I didn't have this ankle—"

He glowered at Burt, who was pacing the floor. Burt shook his head.

"No, I know how you feel. I hated the man myself, the instant I saw him. He's a beast! But any move we make we'll be torn to pieces. Our only chance of getting out is to let him talk and talk. It's a cinch he likes the sound of his own voice."

"He told Stephanie and me that he plans to go back to civilization soon and he's anxious to brush up his English."

"How does he hope to go back?"

"He didn't say. But he said he had an excellent scheme, in which we were to help him."

"*We'll* help him?"

"That's what he said. He said our arrival coincided beautifully with his own plans and that he was very grateful to us for crashing so near at hand. But he didn't explain."

The screams outside were louder. They were screams not of fear and terror but of agony. It was horrible to listen to them and to know that there was nothing you could do.

Burt jerked his head toward the doorway.

"That's his work. The Kuku-Kukus never had enough imagination to torture anybody before. They used to maul prisoners, hack them to pieces, eat them, but it took a white man to teach them how to do this—whatever it is they are doing to the poor devil!"

"Odd about those pygmies. Stephanie and I saw several when we were being taken to the chief, before you'd recovered and do you know, they bear a decided resemblance to certain of the surviving aborigines in Queensland. What's more, their conversation sounded something like some of the aborigine dialects. Of course it's possible. . . . Geographically, you know, Australia and New Guinea were once united."

He was the professor again, the man who could lose himself in his life study. But Stephanie Reeves kept her fingers in her ears, her eyes closed; and Burt Chinnery walked the floor.

There was food. There was a thick pigeon soup, some gamey meat, and many kinds of fruits and vegetables, most of them raw, all of them cold. But this went untouched. Hungry as they were, they could not eat while that pygmy was screaming in pain not fifty yards away.

"I should like to be able to talk with those pygmies," Dr. Reeves said dreamily. "You know, I am with languages the way some men are with music. I can in a very little time and with no lessons master any strange linguistic instrument. It has always been natural to me. And if I really was able to establish a similarity between this dialect and those of the—"

"Never mind about that now! What we've got to do is figure some way to get out of here!"

"True—true." Dr. Reeves cast a glance of hate toward the doorway. "The devil!" he muttered. "Well, what do you propose?"

"Let's find out first where we are, how far from any settlement, and all that. We ought to find out how many warriors they have here, and whether there are any other villages nearby, and just what is the status of these pygmies."

"How do you propose to do that?"

"By letting him talk. He wants to talk. He intoxicates himself with his own words."

"You think he might tell us how to get away?"

"Inadvertently he might. Something might slip."

"He's told us a lot already. He told Stephanie and me that he had escaped from the old French penal colony at Nouméa way back in 1896 in an outrigger canoe. Said he knew nothing about navigation, but somehow he landed at the eastern tip of New Guinea. Would that be possible, in an open boat? It must be fifteen hundred miles."

"Sounds like a miracle, practically."

"I think he thinks it was. For all his sophistication, I think the man really believes he's some kind of god."

"We must play up to that."

"Yes, if we can keep control of ourselves. I'm not sure."

"I'm not either," admitted Burt. He glanced at Stephanie, who was motionless, her eyes closed. "But we must try. It will be a lot harder," he added grimly, "than any fighting."

IN A grove of banana trees he paused to light a cigarette consisting of wild tobacco, black and very strong, wrapped in dried breadfruit leaf.

An airplane? He cocked his head, listening. The jungle was still, but the air was thick, heavy, wet, and reluctant to relay sound. But that was it—an airplane.

Burt was not excited. He took another drag at the home-made cigarette, winced, glowered at it.

In the first place, the drone was distant and did not seem to be coming closer.

In the second place, even if it passed overhead the pilot or passengers could not possibly see Burt through the foliage which made a vast dimness of the earth beneath.

In the third place, if he tried to climb a tree or if he ran around looking for a clear space, he would be stopped promptly. He knew this. No sound came from the jungle, where not a leave or palm frond stirred; yet that jungle held watching men. Four times in the past two weeks, twice in the village, twice in the jungle, Burt had heard the drone of a plane. On each occasion the same thing had happened. Savages had appeared without sound, to stand glaring at him, defying him to move or shout while the engine was audible. Paul-Étienne Michaud was not taking any chances. "Do what you please, *mademoiselle et messieurs,*" he had told them expansively. "Walk about. Exercise. You must not think that I wish to have you in confinement."

It was a dare they could not take. He watched them by means of well trained and perfectly obedient natives. They might walk, as Burt did, seemingly without any destination or purpose; but if they strolled too far they would surely be called; and if they failed to respond to that call they would be knocked down and dragged back. They might sit by the hour sounding words experimentally with the pale pygmy slaves, as Dr. Reeves did; but at least one Kuku-Kuku, himself perhaps unseen, was watching all the while. Dr. Reeves was fascinated by the pygmies —shy, frightened men.

"They're intelligent," he said. "They're not muscle-bound fools like these blacks. I wish I knew more about anthropology. I'd give a hundred pounds to have Professor Davis with us here now."

"I'd give a hundred pounds to be where Professor Davis is," Burt said bitterly.

The older man had his enthusiasm, helping him to forget the danger in which he stood. The younger man had his hope, which would not permit him to sit still. But Stephanie Reeves had nothing but fear.

After she had tended her uncle's ankle, which, considering his age, mended with amazing speed, she had nothing to do but sit in the hut and face her own thoughts. Occasionally she went with her father to the *tamboran* to talk with Michaud, who

displayed at all times great interest in Dr. Reeves, none whatever in Stephanie or Burt. Occasionally too she would walk with Burt; but this was not often, for even in his presence she was afraid of the jungle. "I never supposed I was such a coward. But I'll be all right soon. The shock . . ."

The professor and Burt had an unspoken agreement that one of them would always stay with her. When the professor went to the *tamboran* Burt remained in the hut and tried to be cheerful. When Burt went walking, looking for he knew not what but impelled by impatience to do something, seek something, Dr. Reeves remained with his niece, making notes about the pygmy tongue or perhaps talking with one of the pygmies. Paul-Étienne Michaud never invinced the slightest objection to these talks.

The drone of the airplane died. Captain Glaister again? Glaister flew the Salamaua-Moresby route more often than any other pilot, and Burt knew that he would go far off his course each time, as the others too would do, in the hope of spying the wreckage of Burt's plane.

Burt rose, sighing. He stretched. With seeming carelessness he strolled away. The ground sloped up a bit, became steeper and rockier. He knew what he was doing, and he expected at any moment to be stopped. The previous afternoon he had been walking over this ground, and when he had come to a place where the jungle thinned, suggesting a rocky peak of some sort, a native appeared silently, club in hand, and stood in front of him. The native had shaken his head. And Burt had shrugged, and turned away.

Was there a bare space, and was that why Paul-Étienne Michaud did not wish him to go there? Or was it something else? Burt had observed that in the village the women did all the work: the men would not demean themselves by labor. But what did the pygmies do? Each morning, except for those Dr. Reeves had asked to converse with, the pygmies were escorted out of the village under heavy guard. They always came in this direction. Each night, when they returned, they were men wearied by work.

Dr. Reeves had tried to get from them what it was they did, but his knowledge of their language was not yet firm, and the pygmies themselves seemed afraid of this subject.

AMONG the so-called "free" savages, living in their natural state, as Burt Chinnery knew, a certain kind of stone, a certain kind of tree, a certain direction even, anything at all, might be taboo. To see that tree or stone, to face that direction, meant instant death. The savages did not understand why, and did not try to understand. It was enough that the place or thing was taboo, forbidden.

A savage appeared now, it seemed from nowhere. Burt could not help admiring the way in which these blacks slipped without sound through the jungle, disturbing nothing. This one was like all the others, short, pot-bellied, having huge arms and shoulders and thick bowed legs. He carried a club. He was frowning. He shook his head.

"Okay, pal," Burt said carelessly, and turned away.

The savage lowered the club.

Burt wheeled suddenly and swung a right hook to the man's chin. The savage never had a chance to raise his club again. He went backward, full-length, and his head hit a rock.

"Well, that was bright," Burt muttered. "Now what am I going to do about it?"

The knuckles of his right hand stung, yet they felt good. He had needed to punch somebody. He paused now, his head raised, listening, but hearing nothing. He was reasonably sure that at least two savages had been following him or slipping through the jungle on either side of him. Yet there was no sound.

He knew the general direction of the coast—knew this from the sun—and he could have turned and bolted; but he knew he would never win through. It must have been a hundred miles to the coast,

in this country a stupendous task even for a well-equipped expedition. He was unarmed. He had no compass. What was much more important, he couldn't leave Stephanie here.

He stepped over the savage and continued to climb. The going was very steep. Shards slid under his feet. The trees thinned. For the first time since he had left the village he could see the sky.

Then a second savage came.

This one did not appear wraith-like, as the first had done, for there wasn't any cover here. He hurried, scrambling swiftly across the stones, brandishing his club. He got in front of Burt.

Burt said slowly, "Is that so?"

This was stupid, but Burt was sore. His knuckles still stung, and his blood raced with eagerness for action.

"So I can't go on, eh?"

He moved a little closer, slowly. The savage braced himself.

Then Burt saw the pygmy. The pygmy was back of the Kuku-Kuku and toiling down a path so slight and so narrow that Burt had not previously noticed it. He saw Burt at the same time Burt saw him, and he signaled in alarm.

No, no! The white man must go back! The pygmy made frantic signs: Somebody, he seemed to try to say, was coming down the path. The white man must not fight!

Burt moved forward a little. His hands were fists, his heart was thumping, and he knew that there was sweat on his face.

But there was sweat too on the face of the pygmy. Wildly the little man shook his head. He was in an agony of anxiety.

Burt sighed very slowly, inhaling as though the air scorched his lungs, yet exhaling as though he disliked to be rid of it.

"All right," he muttered at last, and turned away.

When he looked back a little later the Kuku-Kuku still was standing there, though his club was lowered, and behind him the pygmy toiled down the path again.

Locating the village was not difficult, for somebody was beating a *garamut*, talking to a hunting party. A little before he arrived there he was overtaken by Paul-Étienne Michaud.

When he stirred from the *tamboran*, which was seldom, Michaud always was carried in a litter supported on the shoulders of four warriors. It was his only show of regality. Nobody could tell the man's actual size, for he remained hunched indefinitely in that grassy cloak and skirt, but Burt suspected that for all his age he was no physical weakling.

Michaud leaned over, smiling a thin evil smile.

"I gather that you are an adept at boxing, *monsieur?*"

Burt growled, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"We passed the guard, only now. He is recovering. He does not know what hit him—but I can guess." He chuckled. "You are very strong and very quick, *monsieur*."

"I'll be clouting some others if you don't keep them away from me," growled Burt. "Listen: What's this all about, anyway?" He came close to the litter. "You're not just diddling along with us for the fun of it. You've got some plan."

"But certainly I have a plan."

"Well, out with it! What is it?"

"You will learn in time, *monsieur*. Meanwhile I advise you not to be too free with your boxing abilities."

He nodded, still smiling, and his bearers carried him away.

CHAPTER VI

COMBAT TO DRUM-BEAT

THERE was dancing that night. It was monotonous, ungraceful and stupid; it was studied, learnt dancing, with no inspiration; it had no beginning, no climax. In a series of *mapinai*, or leaves, each dance told a story, scene by scene. But the stories were not fresh; they were not apparent; the Kuku-Kukus themselves knew them because they had been handed down for many generations,

but they had long since lost all real meaning.

Burt Chinnery's chief interest, after the first few minutes, was the noise. For he too had formed a plan, and he needed noise tonight.

The music, if it could be called such, was produced by means of iguana-skin hand drums and sections of split bamboo struck together. It was unmelodious, pauseless and very loud, and its persistent rhythm had no relation to the rhythm of the dance itself.

The sexes never danced together. The men seemed to pay more attention to their steps. On the other hand, the women made more noise about it, and when they danced the drums were louder.

"I can't make it out," said Dr. Reeves.

They were returning to their hut, surrounded by a bodyguard of half-seen savages. Stephanie jerked her head back toward the dancing.

"That? I don't see why anybody would *want* to make it out."

"No. I mean Michaud." The professor was frowning at the ground, hobbling on a stick Burt had cut for him. "I still can't get him to say what he's going to do with us. He refuses to give our passports back, or my wallet, but he won't say what he wants them for. He assures us we can walk about as we please, but there's always a guard."

"Perhaps he's just holding us for our company?"

"No. Not Michaud. He's not a man to do anything without a purpose. But he has the great advantage over us that his nerves are good, his patience is marvelous. He has learned how to wait out here. But what's he waiting for?"

Nobody answered. Back in the center of the village, where the dancing took place, was a large low fire of coconut husks. There was no breeze, and the air was heavy with the sweet thick smell of the fire; so that, though they did not move fast, they seemed constantly out of breath.

"He asks all sorts of questions about my home and friends," Dr. Reeves went on, "but he never sticks to one subject very long. I refuse to believe that his mind is wandering or that he's just enjoying himself in the company of fellow whites. He isn't that kind."

"Does he talk much himself?"

"Oh, yes. He doesn't ever really tell me anything, and he seldom gives a straight answer to any question, but he seems to like to hear himself. He listens to his own voice as though he was listening to an announcement over the wireless."

"Have you noticed," asked Burt, "how much better his English is? He never had any real accent, except that habit of saying *monsieur*, but nowadays he's talking as freely and easily as though he'd never stopped. He's getting downright glib."

They reached their hut, which like all the others was a bamboo platform four or five feet above ground, the walls and roof being bamboo slats thatched with *kunai* grass. The floor was washboardy, like corrugated iron, strewn with dried *kunai* and inhabited by a billion insects.

DR. REEVES climbed the ladder unassisted. He was proud of the way his ankle was mending. They lay listening to the thump of drums and the clack of bamboo *tidirs*.

"The only hope I see," Dr. Reeves resumed at last, "is in those pygmies."

Burt Chinnery sat up.

"What about them? Have you learned more of their talk?"

"I'm learning more every day. They're an intelligent people, and what's more, they naturally hate the Kuku-Kukus. They were living a quiet life when the Kuku-Kukus came along and killed all their women and ate them before their eyes. Most of the men were killed too. The rest were beaten and misused and made to work somewhere nearby. I can't learn yet what it is they work at, except that it is in some high place and it has something to do with cooking."

Burt repeated, "Cooking," thoughtfully.

"Whatever this work is, it seems to be finished, and the pygmies aren't wanted any longer. They're being killed off one by one. They're desperate. I don't say that they're our friends yet," Dr. Reeves went on cautiously, "They're still much too frightened to trust us. But they might become our friends. They know that they're doomed unless they do something soon, and I think that they might be induced to help us if we can convince them we're willing to help them."

Burt said, "One of them tried to help me this afternoon."

"Eh?"

Dr. Reeves too was sitting up now. Burt could see the blur of his shirt.

"At least, I think he was trying to help me."

Burt told them what had happened. Dr. Reeves was enormously interested.

"I'll keep after them tomorrow and try to learn what this high place is. If they only had some sort of chief or leader . . . There's one called Taloo who seems to have more intelligence than the rest. He has more confidence in me, too. I'll keep asking him questions. I'll find out about this high place, somehow."

"I'm going to find out about it myself," said Burt. "I'm going up there tonight."

"*No!*"

It was Stephanie; and he heard her crawl toward him over the crisp *kunai*, felt her hand on his arm; he almost thought he could see her large green eyes in the darkness.

"You mustn't do that, Burt! You'll get killed!"

He smiled a little.

He said, "Well?"

There was some silence. Her hand was very tight on his arm, but she did not trust herself to speak again. Dr. Reeves, after a while, coughed nervously and stirred in his place.

"See here, Chinnery, don't you think that's risky?"

"Sure it is!" Burt was impatient, a trifle angry. "But we've got to get out of here somehow, and trusting Michaud would be like trusting a rattlesnake."

"But what good would it do to visit this high place, assuming that you get there?"

"Maybe no good. I don't know. But we haven't anything else to try, so we may as well try that. I want to find out what it is those pygmies cook. It couldn't have anything to do with everyday food: that's all done by the women right here in the village. It couldn't have anything to do with cannibalism. The men themselves would take care of that. The pygmies would never be allowed in any sacred place. Whatever it is up there, it's not taboo for the Kuku-Kukus themselves, and it's not taboo for even the pygmies, but it's taboo for us. I want to find out why."

He rose, and went to the door of the hut. The drumming was louder now, the glow of the coconut fire was brighter, and dark-gray, soggy, acrid smoke hung in the air.

"I know as well as you do that there are sentries, but I'm gambling that they'll get careless after a while."

A snake dropped out of the wall to his feet. He scuffed it out of the hut, not taking the trouble to kill it, scarcely even looking at it. He returned to his place on the floor.

"In about an hour, I'd say."

THEY did not try again to dissuade him, and even Stephanie Reeves pretended to forget the thing they were all thinking of. Instead they discussed the possibility of an uprising among the pygmies.

The odds, they knew, were heavily against them. The Kukus-Kukus had every advantage. In the first place, they were armed; and they took care to keep weapons from their prisoners. The Kuku-Kukus had no metal of any sort, no blow-pipes, no poison for their arrows. There were a few stone-tipped spears, but it was evident that these had not been

manufactured by the Kuku-Kukus themselves but captured from some other tribe: they were not used as weapons but rather as trophies, not used in war or hunting but only on ceremonial occasions. Their clubs were strong and heavy, but clumsy. Their bows and arrows were the most primitive conceivable and probably not very effective at any distance. Yet they were fierce men, born fighters, powerful, tireless, possessed of a tiger's stealth when stalking and the blind courage of madmen. Moreover, they were led by an incalculable, unguessable genius whom they adored as the greatest of gods and for whom they would gladly lay down their lives.

In the matter of numbers, too, they had an enormous advantage. There were only eighteen pygmies left, scared, small, unarmed. Eighteen rabbits. The number of Kuku-Kuku warriors it was not possible to know, for hunting parties came and went constantly, while the men who remained in the village usually were out of sight sleeping in their huts. Also, near the center of the village was a screened enclosure in which an unknown number of Kuku-Kuku boys were being put through the long and horrible initiation ordeals necessary for their emergence into manhood. No doubt many of the fiercest warriors were in there with them—the captives and the women were not permitted within twenty feet of this enclosure—and in an emergency these and the eager boys themselves could be called out to fight.

Burt and Dr. Reeves agreed, whispering, that at the lowest possible estimate Michaud could summon at least five hundred armed warriors.

For a while they were silent. The shush and soft thud of dancing came to them, and the unrelenting thump of the drums, and the high click-clack of *tidirs;* but immediately around the hut there was no sound.

Burt whispered, "Well . . . here goes," and got to his feet.

He felt Stephanie's hand on his arm, and he reached across to squeeze it. He heard Dr. Reeves whisper, "Good luck." Then he was outside.

There would have been no profit in looking for sentries. He could only trust to luck. He dropped without a sound, avoiding the rickety bamboo ladder which would have squeaked, and slipped under the hut, crouching low. There he paused.

A snake, possibly the same he had kicked out of the hut an hour before, slithered past. He could not see it, but he cursed it silently.

Faint, pink, triply-reflected flickers of the dance-fire played upon the underside of the hut's floor just above his head; but the ground was blackness.

He began to move around. He almost collided with the guard, and stepped back, bending his knees, doubling his fists. But he saw that the man was asleep, sitting on the bare ground, his back against an upright. A war club was cradled in his arms, but Burt made no attempt to take this. He stepped carefully around the man.

It was necessary for him to pass five huts before he came to the edge of the village. Before one of these a warrior stood leaning on a long bow and gazing open-mouthed toward the dancing. No doubt he was one of the sentries posted to watch the hut of the white prisoners. Burt Chinnery crept by within four or five yards of him, but the man did not stir.

As Burt, doubled over, was passing under the next hut, a baby whimpered. Burt froze. But the sentry, whom he could still see, had not moved or made any sound; so after a while Burt went on.

When the pygmies had it, there had been a palisade around this village. This had been partly torn down in the attack and thereafter had not been kept in repair. It showed large gaps. The Kuku-Kukus, arrogant men, secure in their reputation for ferocity, had not troubled to repair it. Yet there might be sentries. Burt waited, watching, for a full five

minutes before he ventured from under the shelter of the last hut, crossed a cleared space, and slipped through a gap in the palisade.

He straightened, congratulating himself. At that instant he received a stunning blow on the shoulder.

IT WHIRLED him around, slammed him against a tree. He fell into a tangle of creepers. Even as he did so he realized that the guard had been stationed outside the gap in the palisade rather than inside. He fought free of the creepers, getting to his knees. He saw a blurred moving shadow, darker than the shadows around it, coming toward him.

The sentry's eyes no doubt were accustomed to the darkness; and besides, Burt was convinced that these savages could see like cats—at least they were much more familiar than he was with the jungle and its ways. Flight would have been useless.

He found a grip for his right foot, and dived low.

His arms went around a pair of sweaty, muscular legs. There was a startled grunt, and something slished the creepers behind Burt. That blow, no doubt, had been meant for a finisher.

They went down together. Burt instantly released his grip and sprang to his feet, stepping free. The Kuku-Kuku was up as soon.

Neither man saw the other clearly, and both were hampered by the creepers and the dangling rope-like tree parasites; yet neither made a move to retreat. The savage might have yelled for help. Perhaps he never thought of this. Perhaps he knew no companion was near at hand and supposed that his cries would not be heard because of the dancing. Or it might be that some warrior's pride kept him silent. Whatever the reason, the only sounds he made were his heavy panting and an occasional involuntary grunt when one of Burt's fists went home.

The club was a heavy weapon. One clean hit could have laid open Burt's skull; and knowing this, and seldom able to see the club itself, he weaved from side to side as he waded in.

He struck for the body, a better target than the head. He had noticed that for all their strength these Kuku-Kukus obviously suffered some chronic malnutrition. Many, he believed, had beri-beri, some perhaps dysentery. Like every strong thing, the Kuku-Kuku had his weak spot, and Burt had long ago decided that this was his stomach.

What saved him were the dangling parasites which repeatedly caught the club. Once it swished just above his head, clipping him lightly, scarcely touching him; yet it made him so dizzy that he staggered and almost fell. Once a shock of pain exploded in his left forearm.

The savage had courage. Fully half of Burt's swings went wild, but when his fists did find that belly they seemed to sink in to the elbow. The Kuku-Kuku must have known excruciating pain; but he fought on.

Suddenly he dropped the club. He was not bright, but he had come to realize at last that he was being beaten. He lurched against Burt, taking another terrific punch in the abdomen, and his arms, gorilla-like, slid around Burt's middle.

Surely the Kuku-Kuku was no longer consciously fighting. He did not squirm. He did not try to reach Burt's throat. He only held Burt very tight, tighter and tighter, squeezing as a bear might squeeze. He meant to kill Burt by the sheer terrible strength of his arms.

Burt's head, singing already, became a dull flat hum. The hum rose, intensified, grew louder. Burt's eyes were buckets of flame. His body, like that of the man he fought, was slippery with sweat. Blood whammed in his wrists and temples, crashed fiercely in his heart.

His arms were free, for the savage, being shorter, had hugged him low. This gave him a chance to reach the throat, which was a mass of hard throbbing muscle.

They lay there silent and almost mo-

tionless. How long they lay Burt never knew. It could have been half a minute, it could have been five minutes. Burt was not even sure when the grip around his ribs relaxed. Pain was no longer intense and angry, but only a small-beating roar. It had no sting, no animus. It didn't even rise and fall.

Even after he became aware that the man was dead he kept his thumbs dug deep into that throat for a long time. It was not from fear of shamming that he did this. It was simply because his own grip on that throat was the only thing in the world of which he was sure: it was his only contact with life.

At last he relaxed. He moved, rocking a little. There was nothing to hold him: the terrible arms now were limp. He rolled over and lay on his back, panting, becoming again conscious of the drums, and with this consciousness remembering what it was he had set out to do.

He got to his feet. That the Kuku-Kuku was dead he never for a moment doubted, and he did not glance at the black twisted shape. He could have felt for and found the club; but he knew better. If the warrior did not have his club it would be assumed in the morning that he had met death at the hands of an enemy. If, on the other hand, the club remained at his side, then it would be said that the gods themselves had for reasons of their own decided to smite him.

"Not that Ball-Ten Meeshow won't understand," Burt muttered bitterly.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAVE OF GODS

THE place was a miniature peak, all rock, with no trees. The path leading up to it was very steep, and Burt's hands and knees were cut and bleeding when he reached the top. Dizzy still, weakened by the fight, he had fallen many times.

He breathed night air in large happy gulps, standing with feet apart, his hands on his hips. He looked up. A considerable sweep of sky could be seen, and he gazed at it for a long while, like a sailor who has been many years inland and at last comes again to his beloved sea. The sky was a familiar and lovable thing, almost a near thing, in this fantastic world; and Burt wondered why he had ever quit it for the grubbery of mining. The southern cross rocked low and sweet just above the horizon.

Except for the fact that it exposed the sky, Burt could not for a considerable time see why Michaud had been so careful to keep him away from this place. It seemed only rocks, high and sheer and barren. True, it was a sort of stronghold, in its way, for the slopes were steep, the top flat, and the large rocks offered protection against missiles. A sheer cliff was the far side. A man with a machine gun here might hold off a regiment; but who had a machine gun? The boulders, excellent breastworks, were too large to be pushed down upon an attacking force; and there were not many small loose stones.

There must be something else. The path, after all, must lead somewhere.

The path in fact led straight into a boulder, back near the cliff, and then it stopped. There was no other sign of it. Burt Chinnery sighed, for he was very tired. He put his shoulder against that big rock and started to push. He was using his right shoulder. His left arm had some feeling in it now, but it had not yet fully recovered from the impact of the Kuku-Kuku's club.

The rock moved reluctantly, discovering an opening about three feet high. Burt went to hands and knees.

He had with him a box containing three matches, which Paul-Étienne Michaud, who presumably had salvaged them from the plane, had given him. He didn't wish to waste these.

Feeling all about him and above, he crawled for some distance. The roof of this cave, his hands told him, grew higher; or perhaps the floor sloped down. He rose cautiously. He went ahead, step by slow step, feeling. The passage seemed about three feet wide, from five to six feet high.

Twice he rounded curves. And all the time, he believed, he was going down a little, though he was not sure of this.

He could not see anything at all.

When he rounded a third curve and came into the high-ceiled chamber—he could touch the ceiling only by jumping—he moved even more slowly. The place, his hands said, was roughly square and about thirty feet across. What puzzled him were the things along the wall.

Just feeling them, not lifting them, he would have supposed that they were cans, of soup perhaps, perhaps of beans, or tomatoes. They were shaped like that, and they were about that size. They were piled not on shelves but on top of one another. There were hundreds of them, reaching up to the ceiling, and they seemed to be five or six layers deep.

When he lifted one he gasped in amazement. Though it seemed slippery, like a can without a label, it was surely no can. It slid through his fingers and clanged dully on the floor, rolling away. He took down another.

A can? No, indeed! Not unless it was a can filled with iron; and Burt did not think that even iron, or lead, would be as heavy as this. He could hardly hold the thing, though he used both hands. Rocks? It was heavier than any rock.

He took down another, and another. They were all the same.

At last he used a match. He first placed himself in the center of the chamber, so that he could have a good look around while the flame lasted. He struck the match very carefully. But he almost dropped it because of what he saw.

THERE was no glitter. There was a solid, serene, yellow flare; but no glitter. The ceiling was dark, and so was the floor, but the walls glowed at him from every side, grimly, superbly gold.

Gold! Those can-shaped things were nothing else at all. Burton Chinnery had been a prospector, and he knew the stuff when he saw it. There was no sheen of pyrites. This was not ore, not alloy.

Without flashing, it almost blinded him. The match burned his fingers, fell to the floor. Burt swayed, stunned by the sight as he had not been stunned even by the club of the Kuku-Kuku when it touched the top of his head.

Even when there was no light it seemed to him that the gold glowed on. In utter darkness he seemed to feel the walls throb with light.

How long he would have stood there, trying to summon courage to light a second match, he did not know. It was the sound of footsteps and the smear of light which brought him to his senses.

Somebody was coming into the cave.

His hands had already assured him that there was no entrance to this chamber except that by which he had come. He thought for a wild moment of rushing back up the passageway and pushing past whoever it was who held that light. But where would he get? Would the jungle satisfy him when Stephanie Reeves remained in the village below? No.

The light approached slowly, spreading until its reflections caught the can-shaped chunks of precious metal against the walls, which glowed and shone in sure, firm brilliance. Here was no cheapness, no flamboyant imitation. The walls didn't sparkle like the ornaments of a chorus girl's costume. It was real gold.

He had come half way across the world for this stuff, he and thousands of others. For two years he had scrambled and mucked and toiled for it; and now, when he'd given up all hope, he found himself in the middle of more of it than he had supposed existed in all New Guinea.

Long before the man who carried the lantern had actually stepped into the chamber, it was light as day around Burt.

The man held the lantern high.

"Ah, *monsieur!*" So you have been exercising your pugilistic abilities again, eh?"

The lantern was a rude thing, half a coconut shell suspended by dried sennit and filled with candlenut oil in which floated a lighted wick.

Paul-Étienne Michaud put it down; and as he did so his shadow rocked in uncertainty, then swooped with eager swiftness up the wall. The gold shone through it, blurring its outlines, and it made Michaud seem monstrous: it made him a giant.

In fact Michaud was much taller than he had previously seemed. This was the first time Burt had seen him standing upright. Like Dr. Reeves, whom he resembled in physical make-up, though he was an old man he was firmly built, tough. Except for his teeth, black with age and misuse, and his long beard, which was dirty white-gray, sparse, matted, he was excellently preserved.

Now he regarded Burt Chinnery. He did not seem angry.

"You sneak about a good bit, *monsieur*." He shrugged. "Not that I care that you have seen my gallery of gods. I only wonder why it is that you have failed to try for freedom."

"You don't wonder at that," Burt said. "You know my reason."

The blue-gray eyes, flint-like in their hardness, flickered. The thin bloodless mouth twitched in amusement.

"Ah, yes. I have observed the way you look at the Reeves girl and the way she looks at you. Nevertheless, though you stayed from love, you were lucky. You could never reach the coast alive. I don't mean merely because you lack the supplies and equipment. I mean because I would send men after you. They can move through the jungle at twice, three times your speed."

"Yes," murmured Burt.

He was thinking of something else. He was thinking that it would be a good thing to kill this man.

"SO YOU have found my gallery of gods," Michaud went on. He moved toward a wall, and his shadow bounded and bobbed. "For you see, they *are* gods. And now I've come to fetch some of them to the dancing. It is a very complicated religion we practice here, *monsieur*." He chuckled. "I have made it complicated. For I, of course, am the state worship of the Kuku-Kukus, *monsieur*. They are a very simple people, and I give them their gods and take their gods away to amuse myself."

Again he chuckled, and the sound was stiff and short, cut off abruptly without echoes. He took a chunk of gold from one of the piles.

"You see, I thought my subjects ought to have one thing in common with white men. At least now, they worship the same metal."

He turned the gold in his hands, looking down at it.

"I think you mentioned that you too had once worked in the goldfields, *monsieur*? Then you will understand I learned something about alluvial mining in Bulolo, and when Vanai-Vanai and I returned we brought some mercury, and several tins of food, and some pans."

Yes, Burt understood. Sluice boxes would be easy to make, and Michaud had plenty of slave labor, besides having an almost unlimited field of work. Quicksilver, practically indestructable, could be used again and again for separating the gold itself from the black sand in which it was found. The stuff would be "cooked," of course, in empty cans, and afterward slipped out of these in the shape in which he saw it now. The cans, too, could be used indefinitely. Coffee tins were often used in small claims around Bulolo and Edie Creek. To a man of Michaud's intelligence, energy and experience—

"To be sure, I am out of touch with the market, *monsieur*, and I cannot be sure of the price. Nevertheless, I have at least 200,000 troy ounces here. Call it 13,560 pounds avoirdupois, if that makes it easier."

Six tons of pure gold.

"At the most conservative reckoning, even with transportation charges and the Commonwealth government's 5 percent deducted, that should bring at least one million pounds Australian. Let us say four million American dollars, eh?"

They stared at one another for a moment, Burt fiercely, Michaud with a mocking smile.

Then Burt made his face laugh

"I think you too must worship the stuff! What good is it going to do you out here? I suppose you might beat it into plates, and dine off solid gold for the rest of your life, different dishes for every meal. Oh, yes! But where would the applause come from? Who'd be here to watch you and murmur in awe? If you were to—"

"*Monsieur*, you do not understand me. I shall use this gold only where gold blinds. My Kuku-Kukus will surrender these particular gods if I command them to do so."

"So you're going to smuggle six tons of metal down to the coast and out of New Guinea? You, fugitive from justice, with no identification papers, no way to explain yourself!"

"Do you suppose I have not considered this? I told Dr. Reeves and Miss Reeves, the first time I met them, that it was really very good of you to wreck your plane so near us at just this time."

From somewhere in the curious grass robe he drew a handful of Australian five- and ten-pound notes.

"I SHALL go as one man and return later as another. The second man will be a prospector, and he will make a very lucky strike. Neither the first nor the second, of course, will be Paul-Étienne Michaud. Getting away from New Guinea will be the most difficult part, but even there I have my arrangements—"

He produced a passport, flipped it open.

"The height and weight are the same, the eyes and nose, and the age. Months of stumbling through the jungle might account for the beard, the teeth, the loss of the glasses, which I could not wear, for I enjoy perfect eyesight. And—"

He stopped short. He had talked too much, and he knew it. He even said so as he tucked away the money and the passport.

"I have said too much, *monsieur*. Ah, well, it does not matter—now."

"It matters to me," Burt said.

He took a step toward the Frenchman. His arms hung at his sides, and his hands were open, but his fingers curled in a bit toward the palms.

Michaud smiled.

"I know what you are thinking, *monsieur*."

"What am I thinking?"

"That it would be a good idea to murder me. You are thinking that a man like me would be dangerous out in the world you know."

They were both cool; they did not raise their voices.

"You are very clever," Burt said.

He took another step toward the man who held the gold.

Michaud shook his head.

"There are two things against that, *monsieur*. Three—if you happen to place any value on your own life."

"Yes?"

"First, it is not certain that you could kill me. I am old, but I am no weakling. I'd never have ruled these savages if I were weak! You haven't a weapon, and I hold here something very heavy. It is possible that I might stun you with it before you could get your hands on me."

"That is possible," Burt agreed, and took another step.

"Also, you would on no account survive. Even if you choked me, I should have had a chance to scream first, and my scream would summon the carriers who brought me here and who are waiting for me now at the entrance. You could, of course, never pass them."

"I think I'll risk that," said Burt, moving closer.

"The most important reason is the fate of your friends. Your hope was that with me dead and my subjects leaderless, Dr. Reeves and the fair young lady might somehow escape in the confusion, *n'est-ce pas?* Do not delude yourself, *monsieur*. I have given the most detailed instructions what should happen when I die.

You might yourself get killed quickly in the heat of struggle, but *she* couldn't."

Burt had stopped.

"Think about this, *monsieur*."

"I don't need to think about it," Burt replied quietly, bitterly.

"True. You are not a fool. So you will make no move to touch me as I go out of here. From the entrance only two of the carriers will take me to the village, while the others walk behind you."

He smiled a little. Moving the chunk of gold in his hands, caressing it, he deliberately turned his back on Burt.

"Follow me with the lantern. I can tell from its light how near you are."

THEY stood next day in the *tamboran*, while Kuku-Kukus waited alertly at the door. In his ratty grass gown Paul-Étienne Michaud squatted before the immense mask at the end. The place stank of decaying flesh, and from all sides skulls gazed down at them.

"I wished to have Dr. Reeves hear it from your own lips."

"I can understand that, *monsieur*. The whole thing seems to the doctor a bit too fantastic for belief, eh? But then, you are in a fantastic place." He was addressing the professor now. "Monsieur Chinnery is right. I talked too much last night. I permitted myself to boast, which has always been my greatest weakness. If I had not been so childishly boastful many years ago in Marseilles, after I garroted René Martin, the gendarmes would never have found me out. But that's past. You understand your situation?"

"I understand that if you think you could fool any of my friends into mistaking you for me, no matter what clothes or passports you have, you're absolutely crazy!"

"*Mais non, Monsieur le Decteur*. I do not expect to encounter any of your friends. I shall be careful to avoid them. Just now you are being sought, along with your niece and Monsieur Chinnery here, but soon you will be forgotten. New Guinea is very big and wild, and a professor of dead languages is not always remembered. I am in no hurry, you understand! I have waited many years, and I can wait a little longer. Three, four, perhaps five months from now I shall quietly slip back into civilization—not at Salamaua or Madang but somewhere on the south coast, in Papua, where people would be even less likely to recall your name. If I am questioned I shall tell a vague tale of the crackup—I shall not know where in the vast jungle it occurred—and I shall tell of many months of slow struggle through on foot alone. 'His mind wanders,' they will say, 'and no wonder!' But I shall speak well enough. My enunciation, my pronunciation, my vocabulary—all will be perfect.

"You understand now, *Monsieur le Docteur*, why I was so eager to talk with you. You told me much about your home, your work, your acquaintances and associates. And while I learned these facts and tucked them into my memory, I also studied your manner of speaking. I think that even now I am giving a passable impersonation, *n'est-ce pas?*"

It was true. This French criminal, this cannibal chief who in more than forty years had only a few times listened to or addressed white men, like a talented actor had caught Dr. Reeves' intonation and every mannerism of speech.

"But I will not linger to permit this to be put to a test. I will soon slip away, to what place I do not know: it depends upon what ship is then in port and how much publicity, if any, the return of Dr. Reeves has created. In any case you may be sure that I will not go to Sydney. This will seem strange, but they will say again that the poor man's mind is wandering after his horrible experience. Dr. Reeves will disappear. He will never be seen again.

"Much later another old man will come to Salamaua. His hair will be a different color. His speech will be different. I think"—with a glance at Burt—"that he will be an American. Certainly he will have a passport and enough money, enough sound

health and strength, enough presence, to obtain an administrator's permit to enter one of the uncontrolled areas.

"His success will be astounding. He will return with all his carriers laden. He will stake out a sixty-meter claim and the ten reward claims allowed by the mining warden. Of course all this will start another rush; but only the mysterious American will profit, for his laborers and carriers alone will not suffer from the attacks of the fierce Kuku-Kukus.

"I think then, Monsieur Chinnery, that I shall go to your country, where millionaires of extraordinary personality often spring up unaccountably. When I was young, too, it was said that an American court could not convict a millionaire of any serious crime, *n'est-ce pas?* Yes, I think I shall have a very enjoyable time in the United States."

PAUL-ÉTIENNE MICHAUD folded his arms and gazed with a slow smile at the skulls. He seemed pensive.

"You've thought it out very carefully, you filthy old schemer," Dr. Reeves said at last. "But you've admitted yourself that the most difficult part would be in the beginning, the impersonation of me. Your act is perfect now, I'll admit, but you don't dare go down into civilization for several months yet. Meanwhile, if you don't continue to practice, with my aid, you won't be so good at it."

"I have thought of that, and it is why I reproach myself for speaking so hastily to Monsieur Chinnery last night. However, I have an exceptional memory. Also, allowances would be made for a man who had been stumbling for months through untracked jungle. But anyway, you shall talk to me. You shall keep me in practice."

"Like hell I will!"

"For two weeks," Michaud went on tranquilly, "Monsieur Chinnery shall be kept in a separate house, under double guard. At the end of that time, if you still refuse to have a series of friendly chats with me, *Docteur*, he will be— Ah, well! You heard that pygmy being punished the other day? Monsieur Chinnery is stronger, and I shall personally supervise the work. I think I can promise you that his screams will last longer."

Stephanie Reeves cried, "No! No!" and started forward. Both Burt and Dr. Reeves, whose ankle was much better, though he was attempting to conceal this fact from Michaud, held her back.

"Sh-sh!" muttered the doctor. "They're watching us."

"They are most assuredly watching you, *monsieur*."

Michaud recrossed his arms. He was enjoying all this. The mere contemplation of torture was not all that his mad mind craved: he loved also to witness the fear which anticipation of torture produced.

"And at the end of a second two weeks, Doctor, if you are *still* obdurate, this pretty young lady you call your niece—"

"You—".

The ankle was forgotten. The cane swung up. Burt Chinnery released Stephanie, who slid to the floor in a faint, and he shoved Dr. Reeves' shoulder, at the same time stooping low. The doctor fell sprawling. When he looked up, stunned, he saw that there were four arrows in the wall just above the mask. They quivered there. Burt too was staring at them; but Paul-Étienne Michaud had not stirred.

Michaud had shouted a command: that was all. Afterward the Kuku-Kukus in the doorway was motionless.

Michaud's voice came cold and hard.

"I think we've had enough of this audience, *Docteur*. Monsieur Chinnery saved your life then, but he shall not be in a position to do so again. You have your choice. I make no promises to free you, but if you do as I say your deaths shall be quick ones. That is all. Send word to me any time in these next two weeks, *Docteur*, and I will talk with you. Otherwise—we start on Monsieur Chinnery. *Au revoir*."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

MEN of
Aerial Clowns
FAVORITES AT THE NATIONAL AIR RACES, HAROLD JOHNSON AND CAPTAIN RICHARD GRANERE PUT ON TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF SHOWS WHICH ARE NOT DUPLICATED ANYWHERE. JOHNSON'S UNUSUAL SHOW REQUIRES TWO PLANES. FIRST HE TAKES OFF IN A LIGHT SPEED PLANE, AND, TRAVELING AT 225 MILES AN HOUR, HE PERFORMS EVERY KNOWN FEAT OF THE STUNT FLIER.
Harold Johnson
THE "FLYING BOXCAR"
THEN HE DUPLICATES THE ENTIRE ACT IN A GIANT 14 PASSENGER TRANSPORT PLANE! THESE STUNTS IN THE BIG AIRLINER REQUIRE A SPECIAL PERMIT FROM THE BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE WHICH WAIVES ALTITUDE REGULATIONS.
IN THE HUGE PLANE JOHNSON DOES ROARING LOOPS LESS THAN 50 FEET OFF THE GROUND; HE WHIRLS INTO TAIL-SPINS AND SNAP-BARREL ROLLS JUST OVER THE GRASS-TOPS! BY THESE AMAZING MANEUVERS JOHNSON FEELS THAT HE HAS SHOWN THE SKEPTICS WHO THINK TRANSPORTS ARE UNWIELDY.
UPSIDE DOWN!

A True Story in Pictures Every Week

DARING

By Stookie Allen

DICK GRANERE, CALLED THE FLYING CHARLIE CHAPLIN WAS A PILOT WITH THE CANADIAN ROYAL FLYING CORPS. DICK GOES UP IN A WHEEZING AND RICKETY PUSHER PLANE WHICH FLIES IN ANY DIRECTION BUT STRAIGHT AHEAD. IN THIS ANCIENT CRATE HE SOARS, DIVES, EVEN BACKS UP IF THERE IS A BREEZE TO HELP HIM.

SPECTATORS ROAR WITH GLEE AS HE THROTTLES HIS MOTOR AND DIVES IN A PSEUDO CRASH, YELLING FOR HELP. BUT THE CLIMAX IS "COLONEL THROTTLEBOTTOM'S" BRONCO-BUSTING ACT; IN MIDAIR GRANERE STRADDLES THE FUSELAGE OF THE PITCHING PLANE AND RIDES IT— ONE OF THE RISKIEST CLOWN STUNTS YET DEVISED!

GRANERE LEARNED HIS TRICK FLYING IN THE WORLD WAR. THE VICTOR IN 19 AIR DUELS, HE SAYS THE MOST THRILLING MOMENT OF HIS CAREER OCCURRED IN A DOG FIGHT WITH ONE OF RICHTHOFEN'S FAMED SQUADRONS. GRANERE'S MACHINE GUNS JAMMED— BUT THE GERMAN ON HIS TAIL GALLANTLY DECLINED THE CHANCE TO SHOOT HIM DOWN.

Coming: Harvey Hill Bandholtz—Salesman of Peace

Complete Novelet Handsled Burke

Swen was in such agony he couldn't move

Refugee Land

By C. F. KEARNS

Author of "The Lives of Handsled Burke," "Shivery Land," etc.

No man in the North woods could flee as swiftly as Burke and Two-Horse Swen; and so it took a peril greater than his own to send Handsled back to face a murder charge

I

THE dog-tooth violets brocaded the vivid turf with tossing stars of gold when Handsled Burke cut the corner like a homing schoolboy and swung his six feet two of exuberant muscle through the doorway of the general office at Rickman's Lode. His radiant smile to the battery of envious clerical workers was disconcerting. Rarely had Handsled Burke, the taciturn mystery man of the North, been known to smile at anyone.

The clerks smiled back. Rickman's Lode was too small for secrets. They knew Burke's skies were halcyon, his horizons roseate. His dreams had come true. The office of the Amalgamated Mines was the foot of his rainbow and Burke had come to collect. So they of the pen and the adding machine smiled back at him and tried not to be wistful when they did so.

But four sober men waited in the manager's private office beyond, their austerity a cloak for the embarrassment they felt. All except the vice-president of the company, J. H. Purser, of New York and Toronto and other places where the shares of America's great mining companies are bought and sold on the public account.

Mr. Purser was a graying, dry little man with a canny mien. His name commanded respect in the world of finance. In Rickman's Lode and other places where Amalgamated held sway, it was mentioned in the same subdued tone that reverent people use when speaking of holy matters.

Stevens jerked his head at Burke. Stevens, overlord of Rickman's Lode and all the tributary lands there to, was the government magistrate and coroner, as well as resident manager for the Amalgamated. Now there was pain in his terse, unwilling speech.

"Sit down, Burke. Or stand up. I think you'd rather stand. I hate like the devil to have to wipe that grin off your face but I have to do it. The news is tough."

Burke stood. He put on his hat deliberately. He thrust both hands deep into the pockets of his whipcord breeches and inflated his chest until the buttons on his checkered wool windbreaker creaked audibly, while the throat cords stood out hard and thick above his open collar.

"Shoot!" His eyes became cold and wary.

Stevens slapped his hand angrily on the desk. He was humiliated and the look he directed at Purser was neither respectful nor flattering. The whisper ran later that Stevens risked his own good job with Amalgamated in that moment because he was a man of honor, though an exacting taskmaster for the company he served loyally.

He did not mince words, nor spare himself.

"I'm ratting, Burke. I made a deal with you as local manager for Amalgamated. I believed I had authority to do so. I acted in good faith. You trusted my word. I promised you and your two partners a three-tenths share in the Chikamin Mine for your staking it. Our drillings have proved it as good as we thought. It is now registered in the name of the company and I—because, unlike you, I am subject to authority—I have to rat on the deal. Yeah."

Burke waited ominously.

"TEN thousand dollars," Stevens' face went crimson at the paltry bargaining. "Ten thousand between the three of you. That's all you will get. Take it or leave it."

Elkins, a rugged man in his middle fifties, was there. Elkins, the chief geologist, whose negligence in recording the rich Chikamin strike had given Burke the chance to beat the company men to the staking of the prospect. Elkins' face was haggard as he stared at the floor. He seemed to cringe when the vice-president cleared his throat.

"You were astute enough"—Mr. Purser's precise enunciation of the term connoted dishonesty—"to take advantage of our—of Mr. Elkins' negligence." Elkins' shoulders quivered at the reproof. "But you cannot pirate a fortune out of my company, Burke. That claim was ours in all justice even if it had not been legally recorded." He glanced coldly at Elkins. "Why, our reward is princely. Ten thousand dollars!"

Burke growled: "What!"

Stevens hesitated no longer. His right hand flashed over the edge of his flat desk with a forty-five automatic pistol clutched tightly. The muzzle menaced Burke's chest.

"If you hit him once you'll kill him. You'll never live long enough to do it, Burke, fast as you are."

There was only one exit from the room and it was blocked by a powerful, blazing nemesis. Mr. Purser suddenly sat bolt upright in the presence of peril.

"Burke!" Stevens roared. "Burke! *Burke!* Look at me. Damn you—look at me!"

Burke's head moved once, in a slow, sinister negation.

"No!" His whisper was strained, choking him. "No, I won't look at you, Stevens. If I did I would take that gun from you and I would have to kill you doing it, and I don't want to do that. I don't like you, Stevens, but at least you keep your word. I played fair with you. Legally the Chikamin Mine was ours, all ours. You made

a good bargain for your company and now—"

Then there was silence—But even the pallid men who worked beneath the electric lights in the outer office had heard every bitter syllable that Handsled Burke had spoken. And presently had good cause to remember.

At last Burke said slowly: "I'll tell you this, Purser: If I ever meet you, if our paths ever cross—I promise you the opportunity of making a personal investigation."

His shoulder struck the half-opened door as he whirled on his heel and the door crashed back. He went out with his head in the air and his broad back as straight as any grenadier's. And no one of the staff in the outer office smiled at him as he went.

Most of them pitied him.

RICKMAN'S Lode marked Mr. Purser's first visit to the North—and his last. He arrived on the mid-afternoon plane and an hour later his ultimatum had been given to Burke. When the brief shadows of early summer's twilight had spread gloom among the conifers, Mr. Purser was dead on a woodland path that led to the river bank, barely fifty yards from the main street and not much further from the hotel.

It was Charley Dicks, the half-breed tracker and special constable of the police, who found the body. He lit a match and took a quick look. Then he whistled soundlessly to himself and faded silently out of sight. Five minutes later he was back with Corporal Swanson and Constable Dean. They carried flashlights and Dicks had a lighted gasoline lantern.

Swanson clicked his tongue against his teeth when the light fell upon the huddled body, and reached down a reluctant hand to turn it over. When he saw the protruding tongue and wide, staring eyes, he said: "Ah! Ah! The damn fool. The silly damn fool!"

But he didn't mean the vice-president of Amalgamated. Both Dean and Dicks knew whom he meant. Mr. Purser's shake-up of local officials, his outspoken ascerbic comments to Stevens, and particularly Elkins, had been repeated. Burke's fiery threat was common knowledge and many were willing to wager that he had not threatened in vain. The police had been keeping an official eye on Burke and it was in this connection that Dicks had discovered the body.

"He's been asking for it," growled Dean, who disliked Burke heartily. "He won't beat this rap."

"Hey!" begged Charley Dicks, "keep those number tens of yours out of the way. I want to see if there are any tracks that—"

It was an unfortunate request. Swanson was jittery. Murder was serious enough, but the murder of J. H. Purser, vice-president of Amalgamated, was a calamity, Swanson's mind was racing ahead, he was seeing the publicity, the adverse censure that would inevitably descend upon his head. Officialdom would take the view that the local police should have been more vigilant in view of the threats. Sinkingly, Swanson realized the justice of that viewpoint.

"Never mind the tracks," he snapped brusquely. "You stay here while we get Burke. Tracks! We don't need tracks. We—"

"You won't get Burke." Dicks' flashlight on the path reinforced the gas lantern's yellow radiance. "His canoe is gone. I tell you we don't know which way. We got to hunt him down and that's going to be a slow job. He's got enough outfit with him to last all summer. Hey, give me a chance. There are some other tracks here. Not Burke's. He had shoe packs on. Maybe Purser took a walk with somebody."

"Baloney," snapped Swanson. "Burke did it. We—"

He bit off his reproof abruptly at sight of the big man who came into the lamplight. Then recovered himself to say calmly: "Hello, Swen. Going some place?"

The newcomer was tall and bulky, loom-

ing gross against the gloom of the forest. His jaw dropped as he saw what was on the path.

"Where's your partner?" snapped Swanson, aware of the psychological moment. "Where's Handsled Burke?"

Swen moved a pace back from them and the horror in his eyes was not for the fact that a man had been wantonly slain, but for the implication in Swanson's question.

"No!" Swen gasped. "No, no, Mr. Swanson. You don't want Burke. He's a tough guy, sure, but he wouldn't do that. I was yust looking for him. I been in the hospital and I heard he was loading his canoe so I sneaked away when nobody was around. I was yust looking for—"

"Where is he?" rasped Swanson, his right hand fumbling at his holster flap. "Don't try to stall me. Wouldn't do it, eh? Talk now, Mr. Two-horse Swen. And fast. Where is he?"

Swen pushed his black felt hat to the back of his head. His involuntary dubious grin creased his wide, amiable face as he asked innocently: "How should I know? His son, Yonney, he's gone to Vancouver. I don't know about Burke."

Swanson grunted angrily. Charley Dicks said softly. "He's gone in his canoe. And the canoe was down on the river bank along this trail. There's two or three trails here but he could use this one. I ain't sure if he did. If some of you walrus-footed guys would stand back so I could see if there are any tracks—"

"Oh, damn your tracks!" groaned Swanson. "Go fetch Stevens, Dicks. And the doctor—and all of them. No use keeping it a secret now. And we'll find that—hey, Swen! Stand still! We want you. Stand—"

Swen didn't stand. He had been stealthily backing up. Now he ducked suddenly between the trees and was out of sight. Swanson jerked his gun free and checked himself in the act of throwing the muzzle down in the direction of Swen's crashing progress through the bush.

Swanson remembered that he didn't have any evidence, not even a shred of suspicion, against Swen. And even a Mounted Policeman may not shoot at a man unless that man is charged with a very grave crime. And even then only under exceptional circumstances.

II

HANDSLED BURKE was squatting under a spruce tree, watching his tea pail come to a boil. He was closer to downright despair than he could ever remember. Short hours before he had been sitting on top of a joyous world of anticipation. Now that was gone. The Amalgamated Company were too strong for him. They had the mine and he had no redress. It was recorded in their name and if they chose to repudiate Stevens' agreement, they could do so, legally.

The thump of a hard-driven paddle against a canoe's gunwale floated across the silent morning. Burke stared moodily upstream. It was barely an hour past midnight and it was already dawn. In another month there would be no darkness at all in the North.

The canoe came fast from Rickman's Lode, five miles down stream. The paddle beat piston-like and fast. That beat, Burke knew, meant that Two-horse Swen was coming as fast as his two brawny arms could drive his narrow craft.

Burke stood by his own beached canoe and wondered why Swen did not slacken his pace. Swen was mad, probably, because Burke had slipped away without him, with no word of farewell, for good and sufficient reasons of his own.

Swen sent the prow high up on the strand. He growled hoarsely, panting:

"Burke, you fool! You sit here like you was crazy. Them police is right behind me. Yah. Grab your pack and we beat it through the bush quick." He stepped lightly ashore. "Burke, you shouldn't have done that. It was a bad job."

"Police?" Burke echoed harshly. "Let them come. And look, Swen—cool off. You've got a job with the company. Anyhow you were in the hospital with a sore appendix. I didn't want to bother you.

Yesterday I was at the end of the trail. I feel better now since you came—but you go on back. Following me never got you anywhere. Mosquitoes in summer and blizzards in winter. I'm going it alone this time. I'm going to make a stake somehow or—"

"Yeah," Swen broke in skeptically. "That's what you say, Burke. But you don't fool me none. Hey, Burke? You fixed it good this time. You don't come back until you make that big stake—and then you don't come back. Hey, Burke; you fixed it this time."

Swen was as big as Burke, but cast in a grosser mould, seemingly muscle-bound and awkward. But he was neither. He was, like Burke, cat-like, co-ordinated and fast. He was easy going, amiable and tolerant where Burke was dour and impatient. Handsled Burke and Two-horse Swen had reputations from Nome to Aklavik, from Skagway to Edmonton; reputations that endured wherever the men were met to discuss the price of furs and the new regime that had come to the Northlands with the advent of the airplane and the widening development of precious metal diggings.

"Fixed it?" Burke demanded, puzzled. "Calm down, Swen. I'm sorry I ran out on you but I had to. Following me around has brought you nothing."

"You shouldn't have killed that Purser guy," Swen remonstrated dolefully. "That was bad, Burke. Damn bad."

"You're crazy," snapped Burke. "You're batty as—"

"You can't get away with it," Swen interrupted him lugubriously. "These Mounties will take you and tie a rope around your neck."

"Shut up!" barked Burke, outraged. "Shut up, you dippy Scowegian! I killed nobody. I brought my stuff down to the canoe and I left a letter turning my share of that ten thousand dollars over to you and my boy Johnny. My share, thirty-three hundred and thirty-three dollars, was no use to me. Why, I didn't even—"

"Don't lie to me, Burke. That Mr. Purser had his neck twisted by some husky guy not two good yumps from where your canoe was. It's no use, Burke. The police are after you. I—they tried to keep me too but I yumped into the bush."

BURKE sat back on his heels and his eyes were stark. Swen gave a sober counsel: "We put out the fire, Burke. I came pretty fast but the police won't be far behind me. We got to take to the bush. This here is one time, Burke, that you don't let them police get their hands on you. See? They won't let go this time. We go now, right away, quick."

Burke's lean jaw thrust out. He rocked on his heels, tense and defiant.

"I won't run! I killed nobody. Sure, I was mad. Before I was going back—back where someone would welcome me and I wouldn't be Handsled Burke, the bush tramp, any more. I—a man has some pride, after all. I won't go back unless I can pay my way. Unless I can hold up my head and—what's the use? That Chikamin share would have made us independent, Swen."

"I would have stayed drunk for a year," sighed Swen. "And then I would be hitting for the woods again. You know that. Look, Burke. We're wasting time. We put out this fire and we go. The doctor says I'm cured."

"No," Burke broke a firestick savagely. "No." He tossed the pieces to the flames. "I don't run, Swen. I'm going back and face it. I'm innocent."

Swen produced a little round box and took a meditative pinch of the brown tobacco powder. He stuffed it dexteriously into his mouth, between his lower lip and teeth. He flung the empty box into the bushes reluctantly.

"If you could make me believe you didn't kill that guy, Burke, I would say to go back. But you can't make me believe you didn't do it. How much chance you got to make the police believe you didn't? Remember I want to believe you—and I can't."

Handsled Burke's eyes narrowed to thin

slits. Swen said further, his reasoning indisputable:

"Them police don't want to believe you. Neither does Stevens. He held you off that guy with a gun. Didn't he? Well—hey, look Burke: There's no argument. We go. I'm mad, too. That was the last of my snoose."

Burke's tight breath left him in a sigh. Swen's impartial summary of the situation could not be denied. The weight of evidence—circumstantial and altogether too corroboratively damning—was all against him. If it could convince his own partner there was no hope whatever of persuading a hostile judiciary that he was innocent. And the justice of the land was inexorable: the code was written. It was a life for a life.

And yet—

Thoughtfully, slowly, but decisively, Burke shook his head.

"No, Swen. I won't run. I'll go back. I didn't do it. They can't hang a man—"

Something stopped him. It was the sight of a canoe hugging their shore, half a mile upstream. A canoe with two men in it, approaching stealthily and fast. Swen turned on the balls of his feet, poised.

"Police!" He leaped to Burke's canoe and grabbed the packsack and gun. "Take the rest of your stuff in that other bag, Burke. The axe. We got to go!"

"No," insisted Burke.

A hail came down the water as Swen faded into the trees, and a rifle bullet tore through the side of his canoe with the sound of a thrown stone. Burke stood still while the sound of the shot boomed pregnantly.

"You see," Swen growled. "Come quick, Burke. They mean business."

Burke hesitated no longer.

THE maps of the sub-Arctic are vague and blank for the most part. But the largest and blankest continuous area is the lone lost empire that lies west of the great McKenzie River, between its mighty southern tributary, the Liard, and north to the Arctic Coast.

A blank and bitter land indeed; inhospitable, unmapped and virtually uninhabited. The mighty McKenzie mountains range the thousand-mile length of it and their breadth is four hundred miles at the widest part. It is a crazy, jumbled land of sprawling ranges and narrow valleys and vicious brawling rivers, that writhe their foaming courses from their hidden valleys and nameless lakes, a mile above sea level, to join the sluggish feeders of the swollen McKenzie.

Swen and Burke had agreed that the unmapped region was their best chance.

"No maps," Burke had grimly summed it up. "We follow any stream until it peters out and we keep going until the waters run easterly. That brings us in time to the Yukon and then Alaska. We can hit the Pacific Ocean and never see a white man on the way."

"Yah," agreed Swen. "And when we hit the sea we make us a boat and we cross to Russia or Japan or China or one of them places. Say, Burke, how about heading for the South Seas? Hey? We ain't never been in a hot country."

The third time Swen repeated this feeble joke was a week after they had left Rickman's Lode. They were resting, relaxed against their packs beside a rushing torrent that was all rapids and white water. For four days they had been toiling up it, wading along its gravel bars or scrambling its sheer cutbanks. Ever since they had reached the base of the mountains on foot across country. But they were wary. They had not followed the first stream long, or the second, using them as blinds to baffle pursuit. Yet they were not entirely at ease.

It was arduous labor but they were fit. They carried the essentials of equipment only, and relied on their rifle to supply them with meat. So far they had not used it, for the small streams swarmed with spawning trout. Besides they had not wanted to fire a rifle until they were well into the mountains.

Somewhere behind the police lurked. The waterways were watched. The navigable waterways. The word would have

been flashed by radio and it was just a question of days before every trading post and likewise every trapper—Indian or white—would be on the lookout for two big men in their early forties.

Hence it would not do to awaken suspicion by a shot that might be reported by some woods wanderer. As Swen clearly put it:

"I would sooner have a wolf on my trail than that Charley Dicks. He is worse than a bloodhound. We think we are a couple of pretty good men, Burke, but we couldn't fool him on foot. He'll track us if he ever hits our trail, but that ain't likely for a while. They will search those other riverbanks first. Still, we got to keep moving."

Swen slipped his broad palm inside his belt as he spoke. He saw Burke was watching and he scratched industriously and withdrew his fingers. Burke shot a suspicious question.

"Side hurt you? I thought you said the doctor was going to let you out? Look, Swen. Don't try to kid me. If you don't feel well you are dizzy to—"

"Naw," Swen yawned indifferently. "Itchy. Say we got to keep going, if we are going to get any place. I think we would get along faster if we went straight over the mountain."

"Bah," Burke wrinkled his nose. "And find another mountain staring you in the face. No. We'll stick to the river. Some place ahead we'll find a lake and we can rest up. Kill a moose or a sheep, and get organized for a big jump." He wriggled his shoulders into the strap of his pack, still uneasy. "Say, are you sure your side doesn't hurt?" Swen's answer was a gurgle of astonishment so genuine that Burke thumbed back the hammer of his carbine as he jerked his head around. Swen was staring upstream. Burke's head snapped back in the same direction as he held the gun ready with both hands.

WHAT he saw was surprising enough. A boat was coming down the center of the river, where no boat had any right to come. A sizable boat with a man standing erect by a sweep in the stern and no less than a dozen heads showing along the gunwhale. Two men kneeled on the thwarts, one near the bow and the other slightly aft of amidships, and they bore long, slender poles ready in their hands. Two women in the stern held paddles. As the craft swept closer on the tawny center of the torrent, they saw it was like no boat they knew except it had some resemblance to the *umiaks* of the Eskimos.

Surprise held them still; and they had no wish to be discovered. But a dog thrust its uplifted ears and eager, sniffing snout over the bow and the man with the pole followed the dog's gaze. They could see his lips moving as he pointed, but not not hear his shout. The stern man leaned back on his sweep and swung it against the current.

The prow slanted to the gravely bank where they sat in the shelter of the alders. The craft grounded and the bow man leaped nimbly into the ankle-deep water and held the boat inshore. Immediately a horde of shaggy nondescript dogs and the two other men poured over the side. Indians. They hauled the boat farther inshore, their moccasined feet ankle-deep in water. A half dozen wide-eyed children disembarked, shyly staring, accompanied by four women.

The dogs barked vociferously at the two whites but were driven off by the shouts and kicks of their masters. The elder of the party, a genial native with a scrawny drooping mustache spoke to Burke. He was tall and sturdy and his hair was thickly sprinkled with silver.

"Hello," he said, and, as his eyes inventoried the partners, a pucker of perplexity creased his forehead. "You stop. Good?"

"Yeah," Swen answered him. "We stop here. This good place. Where you come from?"

"Ho," the elder waved his arm in a circle that encompassed the frigid mountainous hinterland. "We go fort."

"What fort?"

"Fort Norman," the Indian told them simply, and it was apparent he did not rate them highly in intelligence. "Summer time. Fort. You savvy?"

Burke stood up to examine the boat. It was curiously contrived of a framework of springy saplings and covered with untanned moosehides, hair side inward. The seams were strongly sewed with the animal's own sinews and the sewing was tallowed and pitched. The craft was propelled by paddles and poles, while the steering sweep was held in place by heavy raw-hide thongs. The bottom of the canoe was covered with soft spruce twigs, the spartan equipment of the natives, and their winter's catch of bundled furs. It was fully thirty feet long by five feet in beam.

"Good boat, huh?" A youngish Indian grinned at Burke. "Go quick. You ride, huh?"

"No." Burke shook his head. These Indians were going to Fort Norman. Quite some distance down the MacKenzie. It would take them ten days or two weeks to reach the fort. A busy period of trading and feasting with too many new things to discuss to mention a pair of white men; at least not right away. But sooner or later the police would question the Indians and they would remember.

It was even possible that the police would intercept and question them soon after they reached the main river, just a matter of a day or so.

The meeting was most unfortunate.

III

SMOKE arose, sticks crackled, little yellow flames showed. Tea pails were hung on sticks. The Indians were going to break their journey with food and stretch their legs ashore. The younger one said to Burke:

"I'm Pierre. That's Ronny Joe." He pointed to his mate. "My brudder. Old man chief. Him Capilo."

Burke acknowledged the introductions with a nod. He explained their presence. "We go look for gold. You savvy any place we catch lots of gold?"

The three Indians laughed loudly. It was a joke and they showed their appreciation. Their womenfolk, keeping their respectful distance, laughed also, dutifully. The children stopped playing and joined in mirth. Even the dogs barked.

Swen's wide face creased in a chuckle.

"Ho, Burke. That's a good yoke. Hey? I bet you never had anybody laugh so good before when you told one You ask 'em where is some gold and they laugh like hell. Hey? Ask 'em again. There must be some gold in this country."

But Burke was probing beneath the surface of aboriginal amiability. These people were primitive nomads, and their contacts with the trading posts were confined to a short period in the summer. They were healthy, independent and incredibly shabby. Their clothes were patched to the limit with moosehide. Burke knew that no Indian woman would willingly wear moosehide when store clothes could be had. The water was beginning to boil in their battered tin tea pails while they watched the white men hopefully.

Waiting for something. They had food with them; dried meat and even a small haunch with long white hair on it. The wild white sheep of the northern mountains. At the sight of the flesh Burke felt a craving for a steak and in the same instant he realized how these people must feel. They were missing something and as their main sustenance was meat or fish it could mean but one thing.

Impulsively he stepped to his packsack near where Swen still sat and groped for a certain cotton sack. He hefted it on his palm, looking meaningly at Swen

"We can spare them a little?"

Swen considered the circle of avid adults. The four women of the party had gathered closer. They were watching the sack in Burke's hand and the longing in their faces was intense. Swen chuckled again:

"So that's what they want? Sure. Why not?"

Burke untied the sack. He rolled the top down so that the black, dried leaves showed. He said: "You know where there is any good place to dig for gold. Hey?"

The chief, Capilo answered; he seemed to shudder, but he coveted the treasure Burke held.

"Maybe. I dunno. Nobody look here. All white mans says, you find gold? Huh. We don't care. You want piece meat?"

Swen laughed outright.

BURKE beckoned the oldest of the women. She was, he guessed, the chief's squaw, and mother of the two young men. She was spare instead of being bulky and ample of bosom and hips like the others. The long plaits were graying down either shoulder, but she wore the only all-store clothing in the tribe. Her speckled calico house dress had been painstakingly mended and the thin yellow shawl across her shoulders was all wool of a fine weave.

"Come here."

She took three dignified steps and stood before him with a small, empty, black pail in her brown hard hands. Burke scooped a fistful of tea from the sack and she held the pail out swiftly. He emptied his hand into the pail and the old Indian lady murmured thanks in a guttural tongue, whose gratitude needed no interpreter.

Burke sat down beside Swen. He looked ruefully at the half-emptied sack before he knotted the mouth and put it back in his pack. He said to Swen, wryly: "Now, I'll bet they haven't had a taste of tea for months and it is the one thing they delight in. They don't miss flour or sugar or vegetables, but they miss their tea. Look at them now. They aren't bothering about eating. Men, women and kids They are drinking that tea hot and strong. I'll bet they drink it all up and I thought I had given them enough to last until they got to Fort Norman."

"Yah," agreed Swen. "Man, it sure does a fella good to see them enjoy themselves. I wish we had some candy or gum to give them kids. What kind of Injuns are they?"

"The Gravel River bunch, I think," Burke told him. "Remember that geologist we met on the lower Liard—he had pictures of them. He was going to write a scientific article on them and their boats. They are only a small tribe. Hundred or so altogether. Well put up and intelligent, he described them. Anyhow he said they make these skin boats and go down the Gravel River in the summertime to Fort Norman. When they get through they leave their boats because they can't take them back up the river, and they pack their dogs and load themselves down—men, women and kids—and head across the muskegs overland back to the mountains. Takes them pretty well all summer to get back. They range right from the MacKenzie to the upper reaches of the Yukon River. Funny, isn't it? Only tribe in all the north that does that."

"Huh," Swen cogitated. "Pack their dogs and themselves. That means they can't take much store grub with 'em. No wonder they run out of tea. But look, Burke; this ain't the Gravel River. That's a hundred miles north of here, anyhow. Ain't it?"

"About that. I'm not sure. Here they come to talk. We'll find out."

The three Indian men came to them. Capilo bore a steaming three-quart pail, battered and sooty, full of potent, black tea. Pierre carried the sheep ham. They sat down before the partners with their legs crossed. Pierre held out the ham.

"You bet." Swen rose eagerly. "But we don't need it all. We take a couple of steaks and I cook them right now. You keep the rest. You got a big bunch to feed."

Capilo held the pail to his lips and gulped a copious draft. He rubbed his stomach gleefully and passed the pail to Ronny Joe. Pierre said, plaintively: "Long time, no tea. No tea!"

Swen produced a wide tin skillet and made a nest of thin sticks beside him. He shaved slivers with his knife quickly. "Long time, eh?"

"Long time." Pierre paused to drink

luxuriously. "No bullets. We make 'em." He offered the statement casually.

"Make some, huh?" Swen laughed so that his shoulders shook. He slit the skin around the top of the ham, flicked spots of wood and pebbles to one side and cut generous slices of the rich red meat, streaked with fat. "Boy, this is a prime cut! You are pretty good, Pierre, if you can make bullets. What you make them with?"

"Lead," said Pierre simply.

"Lead?" Swen spread the thick slices of meat into the skillet. "Where you get lead?"

Pierre's answer stopped Swen so abruptly that he paused with the frying pan half out to his tiny fire. He started to look at his partner and checked himself. He slowly put the pan on the fire as he repeated:

"In the creek, huh?" He parroted Pierre's reply. "In the creek! You got any of them bullets left? That is a handy thing to know. A man might want to make bullets any time."

Swen remembered to use a conversational tone. He knew Burke was as tense as himself. It was a crucial moment and too much eagerness could defeat their purpose. Capilo spoke.

"I got gun. Long time. Huh! Good gun. I show you." He spoke over his shoulder in a gurgling injunction as though his mouth were full.

THE Indians drank tea in turns. Burke folded his arms and held himself immobile. Swen was apparently concentrated on the sputtering skillet. Carefully he added small sticks to his cooking fire. The matriarch of the tribe brought the chief's gun from the boat and laid it at his feet. She brought also a tin cannister of powder and moosehide bullet pouch. Swen pointed to the haunch of meat and motioned for her to take it away.

Capilo's gun was almost the length of a man and very decrepit. The stock was cracked and checked and it had been mended with copper wire. The front sight was level with the pitted steel of the barrel and there was no backsight. Both white men recognized it for an old trade muzzleloader that had been supplanted by breechloaders for more than half a century.

The pouch was flattish but Capilo dug out a small, roughly rounded slug. He handed it to Swen and his dark leathery face creased into a smile of triumph.

"I make," he boasted. "Shoot good. No more stop." He pantomimed his meaning with the ancient weapon. He had expended all his ammunition in the hunt.

Swen tried not to start at the weight of the pellet. He examined it intently, not missing the bright gleam of untarnished metal. He yawned.

"Pretty good, Chief." He flicked it to Burke carelessly. "Good bullet?"

"Good," insisted Capilo. He raised the ancient weapon to his shoulder and sighted into the bush. "Killem moose, sheep, bear. I dunno."

Burke tossed the pellet in his hand, absently. His eyes narrowed.

"No good for bullet. Maybe sinker for fish line. I dunno. Sure, I need sinker. Not got lead."

"We got no shells for rifle," explained Pierre. He grinned ingratiatingly. "All gone."

"No good shoot, him," explained Capilo. "Me no miss."

"All right." Burke reached back for his rifle. He levered a shell out. "Thirty-thirty. Same your rifle. Maybe I trade."

"All right," agreed Pierre, reaching out his hand. "My gun better." He took the brass cartridge from Burke. Capilo made no demur. His consent implied that he had not too much faith himself in his own weapon in comparison with the repeating carbine of his son.

Burke asked another question.

"Why you travel this river. I thought you travel on the Gravel River? This is fast water."

Pierre explained.

"Capilo hunt here. Young man. No good country now. We come over big hill. Make

boat. Big lake one day up." He pointed up river. "Little creek top end. Ole man find lead. Kill moose, sheep. We go back 'nother way, walk."

Unwittingly, Pierre had told them what they wanted to know.

Half an hour later the river tribe had departed as swiftly as they had arrived. They loaded dogs, children and women into the boat, the young men pushed off with their poles and old Capilo stood in the stern with his steering sweep. The squaws paddled briskly and the frail craft swept away on the bouncing waters.

SWEN drew a deep breath, and put his hands inside his waistbelt easing it from his body. "Boy, they are river men, what I mean! I don't mind white water but I wouldn't run that river if you paid me for it. Unless I had to," he amended hastily. He turned to Burke and for a moment they did not speak while Burke took the homemade bullet out of his pocket and tossed it in his hand, caressingly.

"Platinum," he whispered reverently.

Swen took the battered little spheroid from him. Its weight was surprisingly heavy for its bulk. It gleamed in facets of silvery brightness where the Indian had pounded the malleable grains into a compact mass. He whispered: "It don't seem reasonable, Burke. It yust don't seem that way."

Burke's eyes glowed.

"By Heaven, the trail had to turn some time!" he exulted. "Platinum! Twice the value of gold—the last quotation I saw—and no harder to get. Can you imagine what we will do to that creek if an Indian with no knowledge of placering could pick up enough with his hands to make bullets. Lead! Sure it looks like lead, and hammers like lead, but it isn't lead. When we make a couple of sluices we will take a fortune of that stuff out on our backs. A fortune!"

"Yah!" assented Swen. "We can do that, Burke. We sure can."

Burke was growing ecstatic. He could visualize the delayed fulfilment of his quest. Wealth was within his grasp.

"Platinum! We scoop it out. What we get we cache, if we can't carry all of it. Maybe it's only a pocket and we can work it out before snow comes. Maybe it is a big proposition and needs money and men. Either way we are all right. We can always get a plane and come back for it. We can hit the seacoast with money enough to—"

He stopped short and bit his lips. Swen saw the old obstinacy in his eyes, the determined lines in his face. Burke tapped him on the chest fiercely.

"With money, I will fight that murder charge. To hell with them! They can't make it stick. I'll hire the best lawyers."

"Yah," stated Swen stolidly. "They can make it stick. They will be up here after us pretty soon after them Indians get to the Fort. You know how them things get around. Somebody will hear how they met a couple of big white men with packs on their backs heading into the country that don't show on no maps and you bet your socks them Mounties will be on our trail. Them damn deputy-marshals in Alaska will be looking for us, and those Provincial police in B. C. You killed a big-shot, Burke, and you ain't got pull enough to get away with it. Money will help but we won't have time to get as much as you need. No. We grab a grub stake and we keep going."

"I didn't—" flared Burke, and because of the commiseration in Swen's gaze he checked himself. If his partner implicitly believed that Burke had killed a man in hot blood, then there was no possible chance whatever of proving to a prejudiced public that he was innocent. Swen further reviewed the situation.

"Them Injuns came down the river in one day. That means it will take us at least three days to scramble up along the banks. Then we got three or four days to get busy. We got to work fast, Burke, because the Mounties will have a plane in to that lake. They will find out too, maybe, that we traded shells with the Indian and maybe do a little figuring themselves. Maybe not, but them fellas is pretty thor-

ough. They will put them Injuns through the hoop proper."

Burke tossed the pellet in his hand thoughtfully. He slipped it into his pocket, and turned to his pack.

"Okay, Swen. Maybe you're right. But there are lots of countries in this world where a man can live—with money enough. Right now I wouldn't have a chance if we were caught. I threatened that man, all right. Nobody will believe I didn't kill him. I had a motive, as the police say. Ah, I don't want to be hung on circumstantial evidence any more than the next one, but the thing is that I can't prove an alibi. I left just at dusk and nobody saw me leave. I might beat the hanging rap but it's a cinch I'd draw a life term before any jury in the country. Ah—let's go. The police will have to chase us on foot up here—and they won't catch us."

Which was no boast but the simple truth. Handsled Burke and Two-horse Swen could walk away from anything that traveled on two feet.

IV

THEY made the lake by midmorning of the third day, and they had reason to be proud of the journey, for they had spared scant minutes in sleep or rest. It had been an ordeal of physical endurance, even for them.

They stood at the source of the nameless stream they had followed, where it emerged from an inland fiord; a long narrow mountain lake, whose shores rose vast and precipitous. Burke let his pack drop wearily.

"We're here!"

"Yah!" Swen hooked his right thumb into his belt and held it away from his side. "We're here, Burke. Doggone, that's the worst thing about night being only a couple hours long. We don't get enough sleep. Man, I could sleep for a week."

"Umm." Burke himself was drawn to a fine edge. They had traveled steadily through a trackless twisted valley, pushing their way through thickets of willow and aspen, climbing the sheer hillsides to avoid impassable sections where they could not follow the shore line closely. Much of the time they were wetted completely from crossing from one gravel bar to another, for the river was their only road and guide.

"Okay, Swen. You stretch out and snooze. I'll make a fire and boil up some rice. Maybe I can snag a trout or two here. We need a good feed because we have to build a raft and paddle up to the other end. I don't like the idea of climbing around those bluffs. And then we hew us out a sluice box and a couple of wooden shovels and do some placering."

Swen did not answer. Burke glanced at him casually, but his eyes stopped at Swen's waist. A chill of apprehension crawled down his back at the significance of what he saw.

Swen was still holding his belt away from his side with his thumb.

"That appendix is bothering you, Swen. You lied to me. You're sick. I'll bet the doctor was going to operate on you when you lit out to find me?"

Burke thought there was no use in asking even as he spoke. Then he was amazed when Swen sighed, wearily resigned.

"Yah, Burke. I guess maybe I was. I guess I ain't been pulling my full weight this last three or four days. Aw, we find a barberry tree and I boil some bark and I'll be all right."

"Like the merry—" Burke caught his partner by either shoulder and saw that the pallor lay cold beneath Swen's stubby whiskers. Swen tried to grin but it was a weakly gallant effort.

"You're sick!" Burke half whispered. "And I'm a fool! I didn't notice. You haven't been eating much. I was too busy thinking. Planning what we would do with that wealth we were going to dig up."

"I'll be all right if I get some barberry bark," insisted Swen.

"You will not. Barberry bark is out. You've got an acute attack of appendicitis and a physic is about the worst thing you could have. Listen, Swen, you flop right

here while I throw a camp together. The only thing right now for you is rest. Does it hurt much?"

"I got a wolverine in my belly," admitted Swen with a grimace, "and I ain't fooling. Man, it hurts. The worst place is right in my side, where the doctor poked me with his finger. I guess I better lay down, Burke. Maybe some cold, wet cloths would help some. Yah! I hate to quit like this."

BURKE spread their light blankets on the shingle, thankful that they were in an exposed spot where the lake breeze would keep the mosquitoes away. Swen slumped with a groan and lay back limply. Burke seized the ax and leaned over, his face taut and pale.

An hour later Swen was comfortable on a thick bed of small spruce twigs with a cold compress on his abdomen. Burke held a tin of cold water to his lips. "Just wash your mouth out. Don't swallow any."

"It helps some," Swen couldn't quite keep the pain out of his voice. "Listen, Burke. I guess I'm up Lost Creek this time. No paddle, Burke, and we got a leaky boat. Yah. Look, Burke. You are a tough guy. You make it alone. You dig up that platinum—"

"Shut up!" snarled Handsled Burke.

"Yah," Swen tried a weak grin. "I never been sick like this before I—the trail got too tough for me. I got to—"

"No! If you don't feel better pretty soon, I'm going to tie you up and carve that appendix out with my knife. I—I'll knock you cold and then—"

"Stop fooling, Burke," bade Swen harshly. "This ain't no time for fooling. I been thinking hard for the last hour. There ain't nothing you can do. I won't let you try anything. I won't hold you here for the police to catch. You got to go, Burke. You dig that platinum and go."

Burke squatted on his haunches and looked into the face of the man who had shared his blanket and tea pail on many a hard trail through all the lean years they had been in the north. Speech was useless. He reached for Swen's hand and shut his eyes so that Swen might not see the misery in them.

It was in that bitter silence that a low, alien hum from the sky smote his ears. He opened his eyes and saw a fear on Swen's anguished face.

"It's a plane, Burke! It's the police! They don't lose any time, them fellas. You got to go now, Burke. You got to beat it, quick!"

Burke moved with deliberate speed. He separated the fire into two blazes a dozen feet apart. He threw on his dry split kindling lavishly and robbed Swen's bed of a double armful of green spruce twigs.

Twin columns of dense yellow smoke bent shakily before the slight lake breeze in a distress signal.

"You go now, Burke. Quick!" Swen insisted. "Take the grub and the axe and the gun. Hey!"

"Give me your knife," Burke reached over and took it as he spoke. He gathered up the rifle and took a few backward steps toward the lake.

"Police plane, hell!" he muttered. "How could it be? How could the police find out in time to get a plane here unless they were packing a radio which I don't believe for a giddy minute. This is some prospecting plane or something of the sort. Now stay where you are, damn you."

Swen came up from his bed like a wounded grizzly, but Burke was too fast. He swung the rifle by the muzzle. He swung the axe by its haft. Before Swen reached him he had hurled Swen's knife and his own

Swen stopped, gasping. The rifle and axe struck first. The knives plopped after them into the deep, blue water. Burke grinned.

"Beat you that time, Swen. You don't settle it that easy. You'd give your life for your partner, would you? But I won't let you. That's too easy a solution. Jump in the lake and I'll go with you."

Swen slipped his right hand down inside his loosened belt. His jaw was trembling. The roar of the airplane filled the lonely valley with sonorous, barbaric rhythm.

"Aw, Burke," he muttered brokenly. "Aw —Burke. Hey?"

Burke's hand was on his shoulder while the plane circled, dipped, splashed and slid up on the shore before their fire. Tears lay in Swen's eyes. He sniffed audibly, unashamed, his own pain forgotten in his anxiety for Burke.

"Come on," said Burke. He grabbed Swen's muscular arm in a steely grip. "It's an Amalgamated plane by the marking, but what odds? It's a plane." His right hand held a sizeable beach cobblestone. "If you argue I'll crown you. I won't run. I'm seeing you on your way to a hospital. There will be no delay while they chase me. This is once I have my way."

AN ALERT, youngish man climbed down to the pontoon. He stared at the two unkempt, unshaven, huge men. Burke barked in a crisp, incisive mandate.

"Let questions wait. I am Handsled Burke. My partner has acute appendicitis. Unless he gets operated on in a matter of hours it will be too late. You've got to drop everything and fly him to Rickman's Lode—right now."

"Handsled Burke!" The pilot's eyes widened. "Oho! So you're the man the police are looking for in Rickman's Lode."

"Never mind me," Burke snapped. "Let the police find me. My partner must get to a doctor now. Not tonight or tomorrow or next week. I don't know who you are or where you are going, but this is an emergency. If you don't want to see this man die right here, you turn your crate and hightail for Rickman's—that's the nearest hospital."

"By Geoffrey," muttered the pilot and there was an enigmatic grin playing about his lips. "I've heard about you, Burke. Have you had any word from Rickman's since you left so—so suddenly?"

Burke took a swift step forward. "Don't waste time, man! All the word I have had since I left is what you know. The police want me. Now—take Swen here and go."

"We'll take him, Johnson," a crisp instruction came from the opened door above them. Burke raised his eyes. A groomed, middle-aged city-man's head and shoulders protruded from the cabin. A man who was accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed. His eyes probed Burke's, keen and speculative. "We'll take him," he repeated. "On one condition. Burke goes also. He has some unfinished business in Rickman's Lode."

"No. No!" Swen cried, stepping back. "No. Burke don't go. We don't go. Burke don't need me to—"

"Shut up," Burke did not raise his voice above its normal tone. He gave Swen a vigorous push forward. "Climb on that float, little man. You are going back to the doctor. And I'm going with you. It's a fair bargain—and cheap."

"No," Swen clung to him. "You stay, Burke. We both stay."

Burke brandished the rock in his hand. "Do you go under your own steam or do I knock you cuckoo and load you like freight?"

Swen's hand fell off Burke's arm. He took one wavering step back and his foot went to the knee in cold, lake water. Implacable determination was written in the cold blue eyes of Handsled Burke. He would do precisely what he promised if necessary.

Swen reached for a strut as he stepped up on the float. Burke looked at the crisp man above, who was staring with narrowed-eyed incredulity. Burke let his rock splash in the edge of the lake.

"It's a bargain, mister. The odds are with you. You take my partner to Rickman's Lode—and you take us both."

"We started for Dawson," the pilot considered, "but I guess we can make it. We've used up enough gas to balance your weight, I think, but you're both pretty solid. Okay, Burke. We'll have you at the hospital in an hour even, or I'm a liar. Shove us off the beach before you climb on."

THEY landed on the river and the floats slid into the mud, where a goodly crowd of Rickman's citizens waited

them. A wave of talk broke when Swen braced himself in the doorway and gingerly let himself down on to the metal pontoon.

"There is a lot of people," he observed sadly, "but all I can see is them damn policeman. They are waiting to yump on you, Burke."

"Let them jump," growled Burke. "I see they got a stretcher ready. You get a free ride, Swen."

Corporal Swanson's brass buttons glittered. He held up one finger in what Burke interpreted as an ironical salute. Burke nodded grimly in return.

"Lay down," he bade Swen. "Give me those handles." He pushed the bearers away and took the stretcher grips in his long-fingered hands. "Mush!"

Up the bank they climbed. The two men in front were husky, but Burke carried his end easier and higher. The hospital was barely fifty yards from the river bank and the doctor was waiting with the two nurses.

Burke threw off Swanson's touch on his shoulder, heedless of what the policeman was saying. Time enough for routine formalities.

"Go away, Swanson. Let me be. I won't run. Let me wait here until I know how it goes."

Swanson went away, but Constable Dean stayed. Burke faced the waiting room until the nurses wheeled Swen's sheet-draped form out into the passage. The doctor smiled reassuringly.

"It hadn't burst. But the moment I removed it—when I laid it on the towel—it went like a bubble. Five minutes later, Burke, and it would have been very bad. Suppose you give us a hand to lift him into bed? He's a weight and a half. But he'll be all right now. You can't kill his type with an axe."

Burke walked out of the hospital and the silent Dean fell into step with him. They strode to the police office, a hundred yards up the sprawling traffic lane that was Rickman's main street.

Burke held his head high. His eyes were bleak and fathomless, as he stared at the odd residents they encountered. They stared back, but with no hostility. Burke was mildly surprised. He had expected curiosity and enmity as well. The enmity was lacking.

He was pondering this odd thought when Dean threw back the outer door of the police office.

"Here we are," his voice had a hearty ring. "The reception committee is waiting."

The room was comfortably full. There was Stevens, the manager, and the authoritative man who had bargained with him on the lake shore. The man who had caused Burke's presence in Rickman's Lode.

These two sat behind the flat-topped desk where Stevens, in his capacity of stipendiary magistrate was wont to dispense summary justice. Swanson stood, official and sober, behind them. They formed a grim tribunal.

A score of lesser men stood in the background.

Burke had eyes only for the men who represented the Law.

He stopped in front of the table. He said slowly, "Go ahead—and to hell with you."

"I'LL take that, Burke," Stevens said quietly. "I'll take it for myself and I'll take it on behalf of the company. I'll take it for the police and I'll take it for every man and woman in Rickman's Lode—except Charley Dicks."

Burke was bewildered. He stared at the circle of faces as Stevens explained:

"Charlie Dicks did some tracking, while Swanson and Dean took canoes each way on the river. Dean shot at you, thinking you were the murderer." Save his low tone, there was no sound in the room. "But meanwhile Dicks had been so thorough that Elkins got panicky. He tried to steal a plane and fly south. He got off the ground and ran out of gas fifty miles south. He crashed. We got to him in time to take his dying statement.

"He killed Purser because Purser held

him responsible for the Chikamin fiasco. He was slated for discharge. Elkins was a proud man, and impulsive." Stevens could find a regretful extenuation for the man who had worked with him. "There were other reasons—but what of that? We owe you an apology. On behalf of the company, of the police, of the citizens of Rickman's—I offer it to you."

He smiled.

Burke was fighting desperately for speech that would not come.

"I—I—" His face was distorted and pale. "I—didn't know that."

"That's why we are here," smiled Stevens. "The radio from the plane told us you couldn't know. That is why Mr. Colburt, who is President of Amalgamated, is here beside me. He has something to say. It was he who brought you here under—er—compulsion."

Mr. Colburt spoke: his tone was apologetic also.

"You made a bargain with our resident manager, I understand. Mr. Stevens has my full confidence. The bargain stands. We are prepared to hand you our checks for your share in the Chikamin Mines. Fifty thousand dollar checks. Three of them. One to yourself and one to each of your partners."

Mr. Colburt stood up. He made a generous gesture.

"Would you shake hands on it, Mr. Burke?"

There was a long silence while the two men stared at each other; and then Burke put out his hand.

Allergy's Child

ALLERGY is a helpful word. Before it came into common medical use almost all of us suffered various annoying diseases which we put down as bad luck, accidents, general delicacy or what have you. "That child catches everything that comes along," we would say of young Arnold, and let it go at that. But now we have the word allergy, and it explains almost everything.

Hay fever is an allergy, for example, and at a recent meeting of allergists hay fever was called the ranking one. You may be startled to learn that 44.9 percent of American families have some sort of allergy in the home. There are more than three thousand hay-fever sufferers alone. Trains crews get it so badly that the Southern Pacific Railroad had to call in a medical expert to study the plants along the roadbed. He figured out when the different pollens began to fly, and then it was easy to fix up the railroad men. Now of course these three thousand odd Americans haven't been cured of their hay fever, but they can comfort themselves with the knowledge that it's an allergy, not the result of an ill-spent youth and that sort of thing. There is a certain dignity to having an allergy.

—Crosson Howard

He was caught, with only two slim chances to reach the surface

Off Soundings

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

Author of "The Fate of Five," "Feather Foot," etc.

With his life line fouled and a rip in his diving suit, Terry Harlan discovered, there on the bottom of the sea, that he'd been way off his course—and liked it

THE varnished mahogany speedboat came churning up the bay at a slow, dejected pace with a sizable dinghy towing behind it. There were two women and six men in the speedboat.

The weight of these eight and the weight of a nondescript pile of clothes, blankets, bags and miscellaneous stuff on the motor hatch brought the little boat well down in the water. In the dinghy astern two men sat hunched over another pile of stuff.

The man at the wheel of the motorboat steered past the anchored schooners and small craft that covered Fort de France bay and pointed for the steamship pier at the head of the harbor. In the smoother water he opened up his throttle, as if racing the quick Caribbean sunset to the dock.

On the deck of the workboat *Triton* Jake Stone appraised the queer newcomer with professional interest.

"Sunken yacht," he diagnosed. "I suppose them half-witted sailors-for-fun let her hit bottom in a thousand fathom rather than give a diver a job putting her back on the top."

"This diver doesn't want a job, after this one," Terry Harlan said, with a nod toward the steamship buoy astern of them. "We'll be loading up with grub and gas and going out to the reef—for a holiday."

Jake snorted. "You got yachting blood in you," he charged morosely.

•

A SHADOW sliding by overhead in the crystal green harbor water sent Terry Harlan's hand leaping to his saw-edged

knife. In the Caribbean shadows can be dangerous.

He looked up through the toplight of his helmet. It was no shark. It was a girl in a scant blue swimming suit. The danger was there, as Terry was soon to know, but it didn't look that way to him.

She was swimming downward toward him with lithe white arms and legs moving in quick rhythm. Under the flashing urge of those slender limbs the swimmer rapidly became more distinct. She was following his lines. To her he was still invisible against the dark background of the depths of Fort de France bay.

Terry grinned, not too pleased.

"Won't let you alone—not even here," he confided to the copper sphere enclosing his head.

His waiting period of decompression was almost over. He raised his hand to the right side of his helmet and closed the air exhaust valve a bit. His suit inflated and lifted him off the bucket seat on which he was swinging. He rose upward.

The girl, at the end of her breath, had turned toward the surface, now, swimming with slower strokes.

Terry's swiftly ballooning suit soared fast. Though he opened his valve and cut his air his helmet made ungentle contact with her thrusting feet.

He could read swift, spontaneous fear in her sudden spurt of energy. Her arms and legs beat the water in panic. To touch *something* in deep water is always a jolt; in tropic seas there can be good reason for terror.

Next instant Terry shot up into the air with the girl in his arms. He saw her wet, frightened face framed against the mahogany of a speedboat's side. He released her. For only an instant longer did her face show fright; then her deep blue eyes darted lightning at him.

Abruptly Terry was dragged away from the girl by his lines. He was pulled against his diving ladder with a thump.

Jake Stone was sore about that sudden ascent, unheralded by any signal. He thrust an alarm clock in front of Terry's face plate, marked off eight minutes with a gnarled brown finger and gestured downward.

Terry shook his head. It would hardly do to sneak back into the cover of the sea after this, even if he risked a slight case of bends. He gestured that he would stay up.

The girl had pulled herself onto the counter of the speedboat.

Jake unscrewed the wingnut on his face plate. Terry spoke as the angry tender jerked it open:

"Stow the sermon and get me aboard."

GRUMBLING, Jake released his lead-weighted belt and twisted off his helmet. Then, with the aid of a cheerful, tan-hued Martinique native, the tender heaved the diver over the rail and onto his stool.

Before Jake had gotten the straps off Terry's breastplate the girl, wrapped in a white robe, slipped aboard the diving boat. She came aft quickly.

She was a curly, close-cropped blonde creature, distressingly beautiful in Terry's eyes. It was her eyes that held him. Nearly as blue as the Caribbean under a noon sun they were, and about as deep. Off soundings—no bottom—those eyes indicated.

No anchorite, Terry resented this girl. The memory of her might turn his comfortable cabin, with its racks of books, undersea gear, fish specimens and battered portable typewriter, into a lonely den.

Terry straightened up in his diving suit. He had no liking for bawlings out from lovely girls.

"I'm sorry I got in your way—coming up," the girl said in a polite voice.

Instantly it occurred to Terry Harlan that this girl wanted something of him. Something important. Lightning would have pleased him better.

"My fault," he said curtly. "Sorry. Air got away from me."

"You see, I'm fond of diving," she explained. "And I was tired of waiting for you so I swam down."

He glanced across the colorful harbor of Fort de France and picked out a sizable Diesel yacht.

"Wire around the propeller shaft—or only a hawser?" he inquired in a professional voice.

She shook her head. "The diving job's in the roadstead of St. Pierre," she replied. He sensed a tensity in her voice. She—or the people who sent her—wanted a diver badly.

"St. Pierre!"

Jake Stone, having pulled Terry's suit down to his waist, had now paused in his operations. The diver's costume under the suit was sketchy. Terry sat still on his stool and spoke to his tender.

"Get me the West Indies Pilot, Volume 2, Jake."

Neither spoke while Jake, in one of his rare moments of taciturnity, vanished below and returned with a blue book.

Terry flipped over the pages and then read aloud:

"'St. Pierre was the largest city in Martinique, with a population of 25,792 and one of the most important commercial cities in the West Indies On the 8th of May, 1902, by an eruption of Mount Pelee, the city and its population were destroyed by a wave of asphyxiating and inflammable gas, followed by fire. Sixteen vessels lying in the roadstead were destroyed and sunk.'"

He glanced up over the book at her, to discover that she was examining him with a perplexed frown.

"Sixteen ships," he remarked thoughtfully. "Sounds like a foul bottom to me. I'd hate to get tangled up in one of those wrecks."

She drew her robe more closely about her.

"I am sure that Mr. Watts, the charterer of that Diesel yacht over there, will compensate you adequately for any unusual dangers you may encounter."

He nodded. "There's that, of course," he agreed amiably, with a passing glance at her. "Greed is my curse."

Whatever else he was accomplishing, he was bringing back the color to her cheeks. But there was no warmth in her voice.

"Will you come to the yacht to see Mr. Watts?"

Terry reflected. He had gone a long way to get clear of yachts But if he pushed this girl off the *Triton* with a "No!" she would undoubtedly haunt an undersea holiday he had planned searching for marine specimens on a coral reef. On the other hand, he reasoned, if he took this job—it sounded like a half-baked treasure hunt—he would have an opportunity of convincing himself that this girl was a shallow, covetous, thrill chasing creature not even good looking when you got used to her. And those eyes would pale beside the real blue of the Caribbean outside this bay.

"Emphatic disillusion is what I need," he told himself "Once I'm sure this is just a matter of biologic urge, pleasing pigmentation, rounded limbs, a lovely body—once I show myself it's just that I can dismiss it all from mind."

She was waiting tautly for his answer.

"I've just finished this job of shackling a mooring buoy," he said "I'd like to listen to Mr. Watts. Are you Mrs. Watts? I'm Terry Harlan."

Again she flushed.

"I'm one of Mr. Watts' guests. My name is Marjorie Priest."

The "one" was faintly accented.

THINGS were queer aboard the Diesel yacht *Marie*. Robert Harrington Watts, the willowy young man who had chartered the craft from a wealthy island sugar-planter, was plainly startled when Terry Harlan, in wrinkled white duck, followed Marjorie Priest over the rail. The bunch on this yacht were the shipwrecked refugees.

Young Mr. Watts raised a thin, quick hand to the lobe of his right ear and pulled it nervously. His eyes, arrestingly gray in his sallow face, switched rapidly to the girl. Then rather uncertainly, he looked into the broad, placid countenance of Jim Tabor, another of his guests.

Tabor, from his six inches of superior altitude, examined Terry with leisurely interest. He was a cool, muscular man, youngish and good looking. His placidity seemed overdone.

"A diver!" Watts repeated slowly. He frowned in distinct unease.

"Suppose you two men talk it over while I dress," Marjorie proposed briskly to Watts and Tabor. "I'm sure Mr. Harlan won't mind waiting."

She vanished through the nearest door into the deckhouse. A motherly plump background sort of woman called Aunt Eunice followed her, talking about catching cold. Then, with a muttered word to Terry and a gesture toward a deck chair, Watts led his friend aft. Leaning against the taffrail they stared back at Terry Harlan in plain suspicion. Then they fell to talking earnestly. By his attitude Tabor was doubtful in a calm, almost bovine manner. Bob Watts was worried.

Being more curious about this game than jealous of his dignity Terry waited as patiently as any squarehead hand.

Suddenly Watts whanged a bell on the table. A steward materialized and Watts gave an order.

In thirty seconds more the steward was back, shepherding a slender young French West Indian, probably a Martinican. He was almost white in complexion and elegantly the *boulevardier* in attire.

To him Jim Tabor spoke slowly in French, translating the words of the worried Bob Watts. The immaculate islander listened eagerly, white teeth gleaming against his muddy complexion. He turned bright, shoebuttoned eyes toward Terry Harlan and shrugged his shoulders.

Then Jim Tabor seemed to make a suggestion. The Martinican almost collapsed at his feet in dramatic admiration.

WATTS and Tabor approached Terry Harlan. Watts' eyes were still wary as he spoke to the diver:

"My schooner yacht *Tresca*, a ninety footer, sank at anchor in St. Pierre Roads two days ago. Fortunately the sea was smooth. We had time to take to the tender and come here to Fort de France. Then I chartered this little yacht and manned it with my own crew of five men."

He paused for comment but Terry Harlan merely nodded.

"My schooner must have started a butt," Watts went on. "That's all I can think of. Some rollers, possibly from one of those submarine earthquakes they have around these waters, hit us the afternoon before. She surged around her anchor a good bit and took some pounding. It must have been a butt or else the stuffing box. Well, she was insured."

He waved away the yacht. "The point is that there's a diving suit, pump, and so forth, still in her. Mr. Tabor is a good amateur diver and we expected some sport, diving for—ah—pleasure. And now—"

He was getting flustered. Jim Tabor took over calmly.

"And now for the fun of it I want to borrow your suit to go down and get my suit," the big man said curtly. "You'll be well paid for lending it to me."

Terry Harlan was getting sore. This treasure hunt was even less than half-baked. Not only did this bunch not trust him but they took him for a sap. He got even more sore about it because Marjorie Priest had come out on deck, white clad, with her confounded eyes bluer than ever. No bottom, those eyes.

He shook his head. "I never lend my suit," he said solemnly.

"Oh, why not?" Marjorie exclaimed, with a quick glance at the men. "Please."

Terry made his face wooden. "I'm superstitious," he said in a hollow voice and stuck to it.

Marjorie became indignant. She knew he was pulling their legs. Terry Harlan felt as if he were out in a squall with the thunder crashing around him. And the lightning was blue, darting and stabbing from her eyes. He decided to show this spitfire. He'd rip their secret bare and laugh at them. Steadily he got more and more dumb.

Watts was almost hysterical. But Tabor

watched him silently, from under black brows, with his face still placid. Terry got interested in Tabor. He sensed his strength —menacing strength.

At last they gave in. But they hired him only to go down in eighteen fathoms and get Tabor's suit and gear out of the forecastle.

That evening, under the disapproving eye of his tender, Terry Harland climbed to the top of the stubby derrick mast of the *Triton* and gazed critically down the harbor toward the Caribbean. Dusk was falling swiftly.

"If you were a little smaller you could easy get a job inside a cuckoo clock," Jake Stone bawled up angrily at him.

"The hours are too long," the diver retorted absently.

The sea was going very black. A man could not compare its blueness to anybody's eyes. He descended.

"Another thing, Jake," he said. "Watts doesn't want us to bring along any native helpers. He'll supply us out of his own crew. Seem sinister to you?"

The thing was still only a joke to Terry Harlan.

That night the stars blazed like comets in the tropic sky.

OVER the heights of great Pelee clung the trade clouds; over the submarine shoulders of the mountain the blue sea spread out tranquilly.

Terry Harlan on the foredeck of his blunt, unhandsome work boat, looked shoreward in silence at what could be seen between those two hidden extremities of the mighty volcano. A broad river of solidified gray lava inclined downward in a ravine. Its beginning was shrouded by the mists; its end hidden in the bay.

Near that petrified stream a few rooftops showed close to the sea. These were backed by a chaotic and steeply sloping expanse where the green jungle with vine and creeper and bush and tree crept patiently on over the city and people that once had been.

Though the crater was cloud-covered Terry Harlan felt the loom of it almost a mile above him. Then he felt the presence of something else nearer to him.

Marjorie Priest was at the rail by his elbow. Terry dismissed the volcano and looked hard at her damnable eyes.

"A close thing—those eyes and the sea off soundings," he said aloud. "Purely an impersonal comparison, you understand."

The girl nodded. "When are you going down?" She was brisk about it. The blue eyes were dancing with impatience.

"Sorry to postpone your thrill," he replied somewhat sardonically. "I'm not going down until this afternoon. I've found a weak spot in the suit and I'm not fond of excitement myself."

"A weak spot," she repeated. Her little frown conveyed disappointment. "Is it serious?"

"It won't be," he assured her. "Jake will slap a patch on it. Otherwise—"

He brought his hands together in a clashing smack that startled her.

"That's how the sea can come in on you. You're flattened. A squeeze, we call it."

"Is that the worst danger?" she asked almost breathlessly. Her alluring eyes hung upon his face. The girl was shamelessly excited, like a Roman maiden at the gladiatorial games.

"Some divers dislike a burst—when the compressed air, for one reason or another gets the upper hand. Then you're shot to the top, like a torpedo out of a tube, spread-eagled in the swollen suit. The suit blows up instead of collapsing. The general result is the same. You finish on the bottom, dragged down by two hundred pounds of gear."

"You don't seem to like diving," Marjorie said. "Too risky?"

Terry turned his back on her and walked aft. He'd been talking like a kid.

"Nice girl," he muttered bitterly. "Probably wants me to get killed in a manner that will make interesting conversation back home. I'm about cured of her. Or maybe I'm off soundings about her."

On the open deck near the stern of the

diver's boat Robert Watts, Jim Tabor and the spotless Martinican whose name, it developed, was Jules Rosset, watched Jake Stone at work. The motherly Aunt Eunice had not honored the *Triton*.

JAKE was putting out on a low shelf of the stool the wrenches and nuts for the breastplate and other parts of the diving dress. A tank of compressed air, charged by the *Triton's* little compressor, was already attached to one end of the long air hose.

The diver's boat lay to a long scope of anchor line in the southerly set of the great equatorial current. A half inch Manila line came in over her starboard quarter up out of the sea. When Watts' schooner was sinking one of the crew had hastily made fast one end of that line to the rail and the other end to a life ring which he tossed overside. Now the rope not only marked the wreck but would serve as a descending line for the diver.

"You understand," Watts said curtly to Terry. "All you need do is send up that diving gear. Then come up immediately."

Jim Tabor nodded his board head. "It won't take any time at all," he asserted. "Make it fast."

"Vite!" said the elegant M. Rosset and delicately lit a cigarette with a jeweled lighter.

"Sorry to be a wet blanket but the dive's off till this afternoon," Terry reported. "The suit needs a patch on the front, Jake. While you're all having lunch on the *Marie* Jake will do the job."

Watts scowled in lowering suspicion but the decision in Terry's voice was unmistakable.

Bob Watts drew the speedboat alongside and gestured toward it. Obediently Jules Rosset lowered his slender, elegantly attired body into it. Watts and Tabor skirmished unsuccessfully for the hand of Marjorie. She paused on the very verge of descending.

"Please, mayn't I stay?" she asked Terry. "I can get some lunch together and save you a little time. I'm not a bad cook."

"That's a good idea," Tabor said with conviction. He nodded significantly to Watts.

"Anybody who wants to perform on that alcoholic two-burner can take a swing," Jake Stone, who was cook on the *Triton*, declared hastily. "Specially if you want the suit in a hurry."

"We will be charmed—and I hope, nourished," Terry said somewhat dryly. "Miss Priest's unswerving devotion to the job is most praiseworthy. And the galley is on deck, where she can also keep an eye on—ah—things."

He stared pointedly at Jim Tabor. The girl flushed.

Doubtfully Bob Watts paused. He looked sourly at Terry. Then, without a word, he jumped after Tabor into his speedboat and sent it furrowing the water toward the Diesel yacht.

In silence Terry led the girl to the forward deckhouse where was located the tiny galley. There he spoke tersely about beans, fish and fruit.

"I'm not a spy," she said, facing him.

"You just like to cook," he retorted and immediately returned aft to help Jake with the patch and to go over the gear.

There was nothing wrong with air flasks, hose or helmet and a little later he had to concede somewhat reluctantly that there was nothing wrong with the lunch, either.

"Purely—I mean entirely—biological," Terry assured himself fiercely as he discovered that he was watching Marjorie stepping in brisk, graceful certainty over the diving gear that cumbered the afterdeck to gather up the thick, chipped dishes and cups. "Her reason for doing this is a selfish one. Treasure— Greed!"

TERRY HARLAN, on his ladder over the side, was about set for his dive. But as Jake Stone bent down to close the face plate on his helmet, Jim Tabor stopped him. "Wait," he said. Looming massively over the diver he said, "Remember, Harlan; what we want is that diving gear and we want it fast. Understand?"

His hard brown eyes bored into the

diver's face. Terry glanced from Tabor to the weak face of Bob Watts. "I think I'm beginning to understand plenty," he said and closed the metal rimmed faceplate.

Jake Stone twirled the wingnut fastening the heavy plate and tightened it carefully. Then he tapped once on Terry's helmet.

For an instant Terry Harlan did not respond to that signal that everything was ready. He stood there on the ladder, half submerged, looking hard at the group of amateur diving assistants on the afterdeck.

They were all excited—the three men and the girl.

Watts, on his knees beside the gunwale, was now fiddling nervously with the lobe of his ear. The fastidious Rosset, a little clear of the gear, was lighting another cigarette with hands that shook. His complexion was muddier than usual.

Jim Tabor, standing by the big coil of air hose to help Jake Stone pay it out, had ironed all expression from his broad flat countenance. But his big body was tense. His strong fingers clutched tightly at a bight of the long hose.

Marjorie, with a watch swung around her neck, was watching him with glowing eyes that were surely now of a more wonderful blue than the sea. Her cheeks and throat were slightly flushed and the animation in her face made her startlingly beautiful.

"Hard as lava," Terry Harlan muttered and quickly descended the ladder. He grasped the descending line. Sliding under he opened his air control valve on the hose a little to inflate his suit and then tried out the exhaust valve with the spitcock. Everything set.

"It's a selfish reason—even if it does make her look lovely," Terry assured himself. "Greed—just greed."

With his legs twined around the rope he descended into the submarine world, building up air pressure inside his suit as the sea pressure increased.

The water out here in the open Caribbean was amazingly clear. He was down only a few fathoms when he saw two tall slim masts slanting up from the bottom.

"Resting on her keel and port side," he murmured.

A little further down he stopped again. He looked through the left and right sidelights of his helmet. He turned on the rope and, with the sunken schooner's masts at his back, peered around at the floor of the sea.

The sun was still high overhead and the bottom was a lightish gray. Visibility was good. He could make out more and more plainly the loom of a shape at the bottom. It was perhaps forty feet or more from Watts' schooner. Slowly the thing resolved itself into a ship which faded into nothingness at each end with the increasing distance. The vessel bulked much larger than Watts' yacht. He could make out a projection that was probably the stump of a mast.

His mind leaped back to the curt description in the Pilot of the eighth day of May, 1902, when fire flamed down from Pelee upon city and roadstead. This ship, doubtless, was one of the doomed sixteen. He looked at it soberly enough, though the tragedy had not been of his generation.

"She did have a selfish motive," he told himself. "I'm a diving robot to her—I knew it. I can go to my reef without regrets. And she can grub with them for their dirty treasure to her heart's content."

HE SLID on down to the willowy Mr. Watts' sunken schooner.

There was slack in the Manila line and he landed on the bottom beside the yacht. Ash, gray and fine, stirred and rose at the touch of his feet and drifted away on the current like smoke before a gentle breeze. Beneath this superficial covering was hard bottom. Doubtless it was lava and other products of the volcano's wrath.

His lines were clear of the yacht's masts which were inclining upward on the other side.

Terry signalled to Jake that he was on bottom; then valved some of the surplus air in his suit that was keeping him almost floating off his feet. Jerking at his lines

twice as a demand for more slack he walked slowly toward the schooner's bow.

Forward he found what he had expected. Not only was there an anchor chain out one of her hawseholes but there was also a stout line fast to her windlass. This rope stretched away toward that old hulk.

Before the yacht had sunk this line was connecting her with that other ship which had lain upon the bottom for more than three and a half decades. That had been Jim Tabor's work.

Terry stood still a moment, following that fading rope along the bottom with his eye.

"She'll be the *Renneville* if they've struck the right one," he said.

Turning indifferently from that vague bulk, he looked at Watts' trim yacht. She was green below the waterline with a boot-topping of scarlet and white sides.

He stood there a moment in doubt. He had a job to do, to get Tabor's suit and diving gear out of the forecastle. Then he was through—if he wanted to be through. But there was something else in his mind. And it wasn't treasure.

He wanted to know why this yacht had sunk. Bob Watts' vague statement that his yacht had started a butt or leaked suddenly through the stuffing box didn't make sense to Jerry. He shook his head and began the inspection of her strakes between keel and waterline. It was a job for feeling hands as well as eyes. Only a little grass had gained a hold on her anti-fouling copper paint, but even that thin green whiskery growth made it a longer task.

His hands passed rapidly over her smooth, curving side. Working steadily from bow aft he found no telltale roughness at the ends of any two meeting planks that would indicate a started butt. Quite suddenly, however, he found something else. One finger slipped abruptly through a hole in her planking.

He bent toward it, feeling the texture of wood under his turning fingertip. It was plainly an auger hole, three quarters of an inch in diameter.

Terry Harlan nodded grimly, no more surprised at this than by the sight of the sunken vessel near this yacht.

"It was hard to believe in that started butt," he muttered slowly opening his air valve. "There'll be more of these holes along her length."

He resumed his search along that sleek bottom but paused almost at once, frowning. He gripped his air hose above his head and jerked imperatively, once. It was the signal for more air.

The four glass plates set in his helmet were fogging up with carbon dioxide from his breath. That meant air wasn't coming down fast enough. He had already opened wide the valve on the air hose. He could not cut the air gushing out of his escape valve without increasing the amount of carbon dioxide remaining inside his helmet and also inflating his suit.

Almost at once came Jake Stone's answer to his signal—four jerks on his lines that almost lifted him off his feet.

"Come up!" that signal commanded. "Emergency!"

TERRY HARLAN clamped his mouth shut. His face was stern as he answered. Jake Stone wouldn't be getting excited about nothing. There was something wrong on the topside. His suit was deflating slowly. Ruthlessly he shut down his escape valve. The stream of bubbles pouring toward the surface from the side of his helmet ceased. What he had, whether carbon dioxide or air, he must save.

His nostrils weren't acting quite right; they were closing up when he tried to breathe. Some air was still coming; a little pressure was building up in his suit. He walked to the descending line and hooked his legs around it; then signalled to Jake to haul him up. He lacked the buoyancy to rise of his own accord. But with Jake at the other end there was no reason to get excited.

He hung quiescent, breathing little, moving not at all. They were hauling him. Only his right hand on the escape valve

handle on the side of his helmet was tense. He was ready to vent a little foul air when he could.

Suffocation is more to be dreaded than bends. Jake was bringing him up fast.

Already, staring through the toplight, Terry could see plainly the bottom of the boat.

In another moment his helmet broke through the surface. He saw Marjorie's face, quite white now. Jake, his corrugated brow black with wrath, pulled him quickly to the ladder.

Terry grasped the rungs and Jake heaved him up. In another instant the tender had the face plate open.

Revivifying air gushed into Terry's face. He breathed deeply; then with a gesture told Jake to slip off the weighted belt. In another moment he was sitting on his stool on deck. It hadn't been a close call, as things go in a diver's life, but he was curious about it.

He faced a ring of apprehensive faces. Marjorie was beside the stool, looking into his strained face.

"All that happened was that one o' these sons let the air out o' the second tank," Jake snarled. "Just turned the key on that flask on the sly—that's all!"

"And I know who did it!" Jim Tabor snapped. He swung around suddenly and gripped Jules Rosset's sallow throat just above his spotless collar. The thin Martinican writhed, gurgling incoherently.

Terry Harlan bent and picked up a heavy wrench. "Let him go," he commanded tersely.

Slowly, almost warily, Tabor relaxed his hold.

"The fellow ought to be lynched," Watts spluttered. "The traitorous, plotting—"

"Wait," Terry Harlan said. He looked around, first at the three men; then, more piercingly, into the blue eyes of the girl.

"Funny what queer company a hint of treasure will get together in any century," he said dryly. "Desperados of the Caribbean—desperados, all! You run true to form, you treasure hunters."

With agate eyes in a granite face he confronted Watts again. The yachtsman's jaw had sagged at the mention of treasure.

"You sent me under, suspecting in your heart that it was no started butt, but secret treachery in your own group that sank your boat and stopped you after you'd found the treasure hulk," Terry charged. "You knew there might be more dirty work. But you wouldn't give me a word to be on guard for my life because then I might suspect something about your blasted treasure."

The diver laughed as his eyes bored into Jim Tabor. "And you, Tabor, you try to throttle that gaudy, overdressed organ grinder's monkey to convince me and Watts that he's the traitor. You've given yourself away. Rosset couldn't turn the valve on that air flask without going into training for six months."

Jim Tabor's face was no longer placid.

"Rosset wouldn't be much of a hand at sinking a schooner, either," Terry said.

"Why you—" Tabor flared.

"Sit down," said Terry, without lifting his voice. His hand was white and corded as it gripped the wrench. Despite the cumbersome diving suit he rose to his feet.

"THAT'S your traitor, Captain Watts," Terry said, throwing a hand toward Tabor with savage derision. "That's the bad man—a sneaking desperado who scuttled your boat after he had located the treasure ship. I suppose he intended to grab it all later on his own little expedition. Couldn't you guess that?"

Furiously Jim Tabor sprang toward Terry. His big hands were knotted into vengeful, rock-like fists. His eyes watched warily the wrench in the diver's hand.

Terry Harlan's hand came up. It was not the one Tabor was watching. His bunched knuckles moved with the thrust of a piston. There was nothing wrong with his direction. His square, solid fist crashed against the point of Tabor's chin and his stocky body inside the clumsy diving suit seemed to lengthen six inches as it followed through.

Reeling backward, Tabor hooked a heel against a steel air flask. He clutched at nothing and splashed over the side into the sea.

Terry looked at the apprehensive Bob Watts.

"Get into your boat," he commanded. "Take Tabor aboard with you. I don't suppose you want me to get his diving suit for him now."

Rosset was already scrambling into the speedboat. Tabor came up and gripped the gunwale, breathing hard. Watts swung around and hesitated, looking at Tabor.

"I—I can't believe—" he stammered.

Terry Harlan had turned his attention to the girl.

"Next time you hire a diver for a tricky job warn him, even if it does jeopardize your treasure," he said hoarsely.

She looked into his hard eyes with her deep blue ones. He felt the rebuke of those eyes more powerfully than he would have felt words. He realized then that she had not known of Watts' suspicions or of his reticence.

Terry's own injustice maddened him. He flung out a hand in a commanding gesture toward the boat. He could not speak as she stepped down into the little craft. He had been off soundings on this girl right along.

With more haste than dignity Robert Watts followed her. Tabor, eyes baleful in his wet face, was pulling himself into the boat.

"Wait one moment, treasure hunters," Terry ordered in sardonic amusement. "I have some news for you. If you could speak anything but college French you'd know this. The yarn about the money and jewels rushed aboard the ship *Renneville* by the wealthy M. Bourgoin of St. Pierre just before Pelee blew its top off—that yarn has been café talk in Fort de France for thirty years."

"What!"

Watts' mouth opened in ludicrous stupefaction as Terry Harlan tore the veil from his hoarded secret. But the diver was not through.

"Café talk! But nobody's hunted for that supposed treasure because everyone thought the *Renneville* was a blazing, gutted shell before she sank. Well, possibly that's all wrong."

"You can't take our treasure—" Watts shrieked.

Terry Harlan laughed. His gaze sought the rage-ravaged face of Jim Tabor with grim humor.

"That's what I'm coming to, gentlemen," he said. "I'm going below for a look at a wreck I discovered—without directions from any of you. If there's treasure there I'll take it. Hear that? *I* will!"

He gestured toward old Jake Stone and then to himself.

"Just two of us—" he said. "I'll be below—and vulnerable. Fight me for your blasted treasure, you lilies. It'll take murder to beat me— Come out in the open and fight. That's all. Fight! Shove off."

Tabor started the motor. The boat pulled away.

Terry sat down on his stool.

"As soon as you've got some pressure built up in that flask I'll be going down, Jake," he said bleakly to the tender.

Jake was staring after the speedboat. "Sure, you better get under before the bends take you," he agreed, rather absently. "Old Bourgoin's hoard, huh? A swell gang of crossers but say, that girl could cook."

Terry did not answer, He sat down and looked at the rising gauge on the air flask while the compressor hammered noisily on. His back was to the speedboat and the queer assortment in it.

BELOW again, with the air hissing steadily into his helmet, Terry Harlan plodded over the bottom toward the hulk of the *Renneville,* if this vaguely seen mass of barnacle and weed were actually what remained of that reputed treasure ship.

Being a diver of experience he had scant hope of salvaging anything of the slightest value from her, even if the café chatter were solemn truth. His dive was a mere

challenge to those greedy fools above and he had no fear that they would accept the challenge. Open violence? Not by those civilized creatures. Not even by Jim Tabor. Terry's heart was sore in his chest.

"A girl like that shouldn't have eyes—like that," he told himself sadly. "As shallow of heart and brain as her eyes are deep—and soothing. She looked as if she were sorry for me. What right had she to look at me like that?"

The hulk was lying over. Save for the stump, her mainmast and all its rigging was gone. That meant his lines would not foul, anyhow. He climbed up a slanting mass of crusted barnacles that once had been a deck. He looked with rising interest at the stern of the craft.

The cabin house seemed to be intact. That meant some hurtling missile from Pelee's riven crater had sunk her before fire could gain full sway.

He had gone only a step toward the companion when he was lifted clear of the deck by a sudden, violent tightening of his lines. Next instant he was dropped roughly to the deck. As he awaited the next lift he felt his lines slacked off by his vigilant tender.

Terry stood still, looking through his toplight. These were waves that had so roughly handled him. His boat had been beset by a swift succession of short, steep waves that set her pitching wildly.

Suddenly he guessed what these waves must be. They must be the wash from the Diesel yacht *Marie*. For some reason she had passed close to his diving boat at full speed so that her swells tossed the little *Triton* about like a chip.

Terry laughed.

"Diabolical," he jeered. "Diabolical, but entirely safe and practically legal. A mighty feeble way to try to stop me."

Through his toplight he saw that his hose line was slacking above him in a swelling curve. He frowned. A good deal too much slack and more coming. What was Jake doing?

With narrowing eyes he looked upward at the black shadow that was the *Triton's* bottom. Surely the boat was drifting? He stood motionless, watching it.

Yes. The diving boat was moving. And it was gliding away above him too quickly to be merely dragging anchor. She was adrift.

Terry Harlan did some more fast guessing. Maybe the *Marie's* propeller had cut the *Triton's* long mooring line. Maybe something sharp towed by the *Marie* had cut it.

Jake, alone on a drifting boat with a diver down, would be busy. Probably when he had rushed forward to get over the spare anchor some coils of the air hose on the afterdeck had been tossed overside by the rolling of the boat. That would explain the slack.

Terry looked with sudden intensity toward the dim blur that was Robert Watts' sunken schooner. His slack lines tended in that direction. And he remembered the tall masts of the schooner, slanting toward the surface. Danger!

TERRY seized his hose and rapidly took in some of the slack. Abruptly the rubber line tautened in his grasp. He pulled but felt no give to the hose. It was already fouled in the schooner's rigging, as he had feared.

Now he was in a tight place. Divers' troubles come quickly. Death threatened—and from those petty, civilized bad men. They had meant only to cut him adrift to lose the location of the hulk, but they had done more—plenty more.

"Two chances!" he muttered.

One was to get to that jam of lines in the rigging of the schooner and clear it himself. But while he struggled across the bottom the pitching, drifting boat might at any instant bring up on the other end of his hose and life line and part them in the sudden strain.

He took the other course.

With swift and purposeful hand he shut his escape valve, holding all his air. Simultaneously he increased the flow of air into his helmet. He wasted no time in attempting to rid himself of belt and shoes.

Rapidly the canvas and rubber suit expanded as the air hissed in. Helmet and breastplate lifted high off his shoulders. His feet were pressing less heavily upon the bottom.

His hands grasped tensely the handles of those two valves, air control and escape, alert as a fencer's hands upon his foil.

His feet drifted clear of the bottom. The pull of the swelling air-tight bag in which he was imprisoned had overcome the downward drag of gravity.

He rose off the bottom. His hands twisted the two valve handles with frantic speed. He knew his new danger. Already, ever faster, he was moving upward. He tried furiously to cut down the rush of air into his suit.

The terrific pressure of the sea upon him dropped swiftly as he rose. Unless he could cut as rapidly the balancing pressure of the air within his suit the straining fabric would explode like a penny balloon. The water swirled against helmet and suit as his upward rush accelerated. He fought to keep his arms bent and his fingers on the valves. The air-filled arms of the suit were being straightened out by the pressure. Any instant he might be spread-eagled.

With a shock his rise was stopped. He was whirled around. Helplessly he hung suspended, head downward, bulging suit still fighting to rise toward the top.

The buoyant bag in which he was encased was straining against a rigid air hose stretching upward from the jam in the rigging of the sunken schooner. There was not enough hose clear to permit him to reach the surface. His chance had gone wrong. Caught.

Terry managed to keep on valving air. The suit deflated somewhat. He was not twenty feet from the top. He shut the escape valve again. His fingers were steady.

With no hesitation he jerked his keen diver's knife out of the sheath on his belt. He slashed through air hose and life line.

Freed, he was shot toward the surface. No water gushed into his suit through the severed hose. The safety valve in his helmet—a one way valve—had closed to hold in his air.

HE SURGED turbulently into the air; then dropped back to float on the sea. On top, he was yet imprisoned within the buoyant suit—completely cut off from outside air. Ironic situation. When his lungs had used up the scant supply in the suit he must choose between suffocation and slitting the suit. It was a terrible choice. If he slashed the suit he would gulp air for a fleeting instant and then be dragged to the bottom as the suit filled with water. Unless— He craned his neck this way and that and managed to get a glimpse of the *Triton*. His heart leaped.

The boat had stopped drifting. She was held by her second anchor. Terry stared through his toplight, breathing with short, grudging inhalations to ease the ache in his lungs. He wondered if what he glimpsed on the *Triton* was actually there.

Marjorie, a dripping, bedraggled figure, stood on the foredeck of his diving boat, beside the little anchor windlass. She was throwing a couple of hitches of the anchor line around the windlass drum with quick, accustomed hands.

Jake Stone was frantically fighting his end of the fouled air horse, struggling to clear it. He did not yet know that Terry had cut himself loose.

Of a sudden the new patch on the front of Terry's suit blew off under the urge of the air within. The fabric near it ripped—a long, ugly tear. The air gushed out as Terry grabbed at the edges with frantic hands. He began to sink.

Swiftly he dropped off his belt. That didn't help much. His lead-weighted feet swung downward. He could not close the rent or halt the sighing air. His helmet pressed down on him.

His eyes, dropping steadily toward the surface of the water, turned toward Marjorie. He knew then, in sure agony, that he loved that girl and that he loved her for her spirit, the spirit that had somehow brought her back to the *Triton's* deck.

As he looked he saw that the burst of the patch had drawn her eyes to him—to him, sinking with slashed lines and ripped suit to the bottom.

Marjorie did the only thing she could do and she did it fast. She caught up the end of a line off the *Triton's* cluttered deck and dived overboard. She swam toward him, tugging the rope with her. Jake was leaping toward the other end.

Terry's fingers, with torn nails, fought futilely to keep some air inside the ripped fabric. His helmeted head slipped under with a little splash. His straining eyes lost sight of her. She had been very close.

The girl did not give up. He heard her churning the water. She thrust herself under, too, and swam downward after him. She reached him; he felt fingers grasping at his arm. The other hand struggled to pass the line under his shoulders.

Terry, with the light fading, tried feebly to push her clear. But she clung to him. She got the rope around. That was all he knew as the girl and the sea and his aching lungs became things in a dream and then nothing at all.

THE *Triton*, with Jake staring ahead and with Terry propped up against the afterhouse beside the girl, chugged along the coast toward Fort de France. A long quarter of a mile behind her the Diesel yacht trailed indecisively.

"They didn't mean to try to kill you, Terry," Marjorie said in unwilling justice.

Terry laughed suddenly. "Weak tea—that bunch. But I'm grateful to them. If they hadn't cut the *Triton's* anchor line you wouldn't have jumped over to help Jake—and me. You wouldn't be here, Marjorie. I'd still be off soundings about you."

He tightened his grip on her hand at the thought of such a bleak contingency.

"It wasn't adventure that brought them to Martinique; it was just greed," the girl explained sadly. "They were after the treasure, not the fun of getting it, and Tabor and Bob Watts wouldn't even let me go down in the diving suit—not once."

"You—you wanted to dive?" he asked, sitting up straight.

"My lungs have always given out too soon to see all I wanted of the coral and the queer creatures of the sea," she said.

Her eyes were bluer than any water he had ever seen but he understood as he looked into them that it was not alone their color but all the beautiful things in their depths that had been calling to him.

His face glowed happily, exultantly.

"I'll take a look into the *Renneville*—for adventure," he said. "And then—good luck or bad—did you know I had a reef in the open sea that I've been saving for you and me to explore for a long, long time?"

What, No Joneses?

THE Smiths appear to be still in the lead. They are, they will be pleased to know, holding a nice lead over the Johnsons, the Millers and such. At least that is the report of the Social Security Board which announced not long ago the comparative standing of the most popular American names.

In the Social Security records there are 470,190 Smiths and 348,530 Johnsons. The Browns, Millers and Williamses are all over 200,000 each. The fact that Smith leads all the rest should create a firmer bond between the members of that great family; together they will be better able to withstand the innumerable poor jokes made about their name.

—*Augustus Harden*

The table was laid in the patio. "Sit down, please," Judge Lester said

Cut Loose Your Wolf

By BENNETT FOSTER

THE boyhood of Larry Blue was a strange and eventful one. When his father died on the gallows for the murder of a rancher named Haslip, Larry swore that he would never be in a position where the lack of money and clever counsel could jeopardize his life. Don, his younger brother, will become a lawyer; Larry will provide money.

He leaves Don in charge of Father Paul, and sets out to make his way in the world. He is befriended first by Archer Bolton, a scapegrace ne'er-do-well from the East, next by the trapper, Jim Cardwine, and finally by a roving gambler, Royal Truman. From these three men he receives his whole education. Bolton teaches him to read and write; from Cardwine he learns how to ride and shoot and defend himself in a rough-and-tumble scrap; and from Truman, he learns the exciting ways of the booming towns scattered throughout the West. One thing that Cardwine knew, Larry never found out —that Haslip's real murderer was one George Whiteman.

AS THE years pass, Larry's life seems full and good. Don is finished his schooling and preparing for his bar examinations. Larry and Truman are the proprietors of a Denver gambling-house. Neither of them is aware of how much Don owes to ex-Judge Lester, the magistrate who sentenced Larry's father to hang. But Lester has arranged that Don come back to Franklin on an errand, oddly enough, concerned with the estate of Archer Bolton, whose heirs, DeWitt and Constance, his brother's children, are also to arrive in Franklin on a visit to their aunt.

To complete the tangled skein by which the fabric of Larry's life is to be woven, Destiny is sending two others back to Franklin: Annette Bondreaux, Larry and Don's childhood playmate, and now the star of a one-night-stand musical troupe and George Whiteman, recently released from Leavenworth Prison.

A letter from Whiteman to Abe Seemans, recently elected mayor of Franklin, hints that certain affairs in their past can be arranged

This story began in the Argosy for August 6

now to their mutual advantage. But what these affairs are, neither Seemans' wife, Louella, the sister of the dead Archer Bolton, nor the law-abiding citizens of Franklin who elected Seemans on a law-and-order platform, are to discover. . . .

CHAPTER XV

REUNION

LARRY BLUE got off the palace car at the Franklin depot, alighting on the cinders of the platform. He held himself a little stiffly and his face beneath the blond hair was pale. The trip down the river valley and across the baked plain of the Jornado del Muerte, had been one long delirium of heat and more heat. And there was no relief here on this sun-assaulted cinder-platform. Behind Larry the brakeman, sweating, shirt-sleeved and with his cap pushed back on his head, put two bags on the cinders.

"Here you are, Mr. Blue."

Larry thanked him absently, his blue eyes searching the platform for his brother. Surely Don would be there. Surely Don would come to meet him. With a start Larry realized that he would not know Don. He had not seen him for fifteen years. Don was twenty-five, a man grown, just as he, Larry Blue, was a man grown. Would Don recognize him?

A man came hurrying through the crowd that had descended from the train, a young blond fellow who anxiously scanned the faces of the men he passed. Don! Larry almost laughed aloud. He had thought that he would not recognize Don. Not recognize that blond replica of himself that came hurrying along? It was funny! Larry half raised his arm to attract the attention of the hurrying youngster and at that moment Don saw him.

Don Blue finished his journey down the platform at a run. "Larry!" his voice was a shout. Instantly, it seemed, he was beside Larry, Larry's hand in his, his arm about Larry's shoulders. "Larry! I didn't know. I thought . . ."

"That you wouldn't know me," Larry finished, grinning. "I was thinking the same thing. Easy, kid, take it a little easy. That side is still a little sore."

Instantly Don was contrite. He dropped his arm from Larry's shoulders but didn't let go of his hand. "You don't know good it is to see you," Don said. "I forgot all about your being hurt I was so excited. I forgot all about everything. How is your side? Does it pain you badly?"

"I forgot it, too, kid," Larry answered. "It doesn't hurt. By George. Stand off and let me look at you."

Don stood back. There were spots of color on his cheeks and his eyes blazed with excitement. Larry saw before him a well set-up young fellow, a trifle thin perhaps, but healthy, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped, dressed in a modish suit and with a stylish narrow-brimmed, low-crowned derby hat on blond hair that was inclined to curl. Don was clean-shaven and there were not as yet the lines that would give his face character.

On his part Don Blue looked at the brother that he had not seen for so long. Larry Blue was as tall as Don. His shoulders were thicker than Don's, but his hips were as lean and narrow. Larry held himself stiffly because of his wound. A black slouch hat of finest felt was pulled over his eyes; the square skirts of his long black broadcloth coat hung over gray trousers. Larry wore boots, singularly small for so big a man; his hands were long, the fingers promising dexterity. His mustache was small and dark, and about his eyes and at the corners of his mouth were little firm creases. Here was a man who seldom smiled, but whose whole face was lighted when he did.

THE two brothers were grave as they inspected each other and then suddenly they laughed and each took a step forward.

"Kid!" said Larry.

"Larry," exclaimed Don.

Again their hands met to grasp firmly.

"I've got to get you in out of this sun," Don announced, after a moment. "I've

a carriage here. "We'll get your luggage."

Larry stepping back, bent for the grips. Don forestalled him.

"I'll take those," he said, picking up the grips. "Come on Larry. Come on!"

Don had a barouche waiting in front of the depot, the top up and a driver sitting stiffly on the seat. He put Larry's bags in to the carriage, helped Larry in, and got in himself. The driver, a dark-faced native, looked around for orders.

"Just take me to the hotel," directed Larry. "Then you can send your buggy along to the livery and you and me will visit."

Don laughed. "This is no livery stable rig," he informed. "Judge Lester— What's the matter, Larry?"

Larry Blue had started to get up. "You know what I think of Lester," he stated, his face stormy. "If this belongs to Lester—"

"Sit down," Don commanded. "Judge Lester is expecting us. I'm staying with him and he has had a room made ready for you. Surely, Larry—"

"You and me have got to talk, Don," interrupted Larry. "I'll ride in this rig but I don't like it. Take me to the hotel, driver."

The driver, his face impassive, looked at Don for directions. Don nodded and turning the coachman started the team.

As the barouche rolled along from the depot up Franklin's busy thoroughfare, Larry Blue kept his eyes straight ahead. He was scowling, not noticing the buildings on either side or the people on the sidewalks. Don, too, kept silent and it was not until the horses stopped that he spoke.

"Here's the hotel, Larry."

Larry got out of the barouche, Don following him. A porter coming from the door, took the grips and the two men entered the hotel, Larry making straight for the desk. He registered in the book the clerk turned toward him, nodding impatiently at the mention of accommodations and rates, and taking the key that was offered, turned to his brother. "Come on up," Larry commanded.

Don followed as Larry led the way toward the stairs, the porter carrying the grips, brushing past to precede them.

The porter led the way along the upper hall, took the key from Larry and unlocked a door and let the two men enter the room. Larry tipped the boy, then crossing to the bed, took off his hat and sat down. Don Blue stayed standing beside the door.

"You're being foolish, Larry," he said bluntly. "I'm in partnership with Judge Lester. Everything I have I owe to him. He got me into Sutherland's office back in Boston; he helped me when I was in school. Now he's given me this chance to come in with him here. You may have some idea concerning him. . . ."

"Some idea!" Larry snapped the words. "Lester is the man that sentenced Dad to hang! You say he's done everything for you. How about me? I suppose that I—?"

"Of course you helped me," Don interposed swiftly. "I'd be the last to say you didn't. Don't think that I don't appreciate it. Just the same if it hadn't been for John Lester— Why Larry, he's done everything for me: Given me entrée into circles I could never have reached alone; given me an opportunity that any young lawyer would jump at. I tell you, Larry—"

Larry Blue looked up and smiled ruefully. "I reckon I wasn't so much as I thought I was," he said softly. "Somehow I had the idea— Well, you needn't be beholden to Lester any more. I'm here and I've got enough money with me to do almost anything you want. Would fifteen thousand let you cut loose from Lester, Don? Because if it would—"

Larry got up from the bed and, unfastening his silk piqué vest and opening his shirt, fell to fumbling with a buckle. Don watched him. Larry pulled out a soft leather belt of finest cordovan, with flapped pockets along its length.

"I've got fifteen thousand here," Larry said, holding out the money belt, "and a telegram to Royal will bring that much

or more if we need it. Here Don, you take this and—"

Don made a little gesture. "You don't understand, Larry," he said. "I can't take your money. You've sent me a lot, more than I needed. I can't take money and go to John Lester and say that I'm done with him. It goes deeper than that."

LARRY BLUE sat back on the bed, his money belt across his lap. Larry's coat was open and Don could see, peeping out from beneath Larry's right arm the dull blue of a gun butt.

"I reckon I don't understand," Larry Blue drawled slowly. "It's going to take a heap of understanding for me to see how you could hook up with the man that hung your daddy."

"But he didn't hang him. He— Oh, you don't understand, Larry. Why do we have to quarrel when you've just got here, when we haven't seen each other for fifteen years? Why can't we be friends? Remember how I used to tag you around when we were kids and how you'd cook for me and look after me when Father was off on a spree? Remember—?"

Larry Blue's face softened. "We won't quarrel, kid," he said softly. "If you want to hook up with Lester I won't like it, but I won't say a word. Only don't ask me to tie up with him."

Don had won a partial victory. He was shrewd enough to let it go at that. "How did you get hurt, Larry?" he asked. "I'd counted on meeting you at La Junta and coming on down to Franklin together. What happened? I had a letter from Truman—"

"Couple fellows got bad one night," Larry's tone was evasive. "Tried to hold up the place We'd had an extra good day and I didn't want to see it all go out, so I tried to stop them. One of them got me in the side before Royal came in."

"But the other two? What happened to them? Truman said that you took care of them. He said—did you kill them, Larry?"

"How come you didn't come over to Denver when I couldn't meet you at La Junta, kid?" asked Larry. "I kind of looked for you over there. I couldn't travel, but I thought that you'd—"

"I was carrying some papers from Mr. Sutherland to Judge Lester," Don answered. "I had to get them down here right away or I'd have come to Denver."

Larry nodded and Don went on. "You remember the Cross C, Larry? Clark Andrews owned it. His wife inherited the property when he died. Well, Mrs. Andrews had a half brother named Archer Bolton. She had two half brothers, in fact: One in Boston and the other, Archer, here. The brother that lived in Boston died and Archer Bolton went back there and married his widow. She had two children, a girl, Constance, and a boy named DeWitt. Archer Bolton died in Boston not long ago and his stepchildren inherited his property. Mrs. Andrews is trying to get some of it. She has married again, a man named Seemans who is mayor here. I've been trying to help Judge Lester save the property for the children. I had a number of documents that pertained to the case and— What's the matter, Larry?"

Larry Blue's eyes were blank, as though he looked into distance. He was remembering a woodpile beside which he leaned upon an ax, and where stood a thin-faced, handsome woman and two black-haired children.

"Nothing," answered Larry. "Go on, Don."

"Archer Bolton died intestate," said Don, resuming his story. "If he had made a will Mrs. Andrews—Seemans I suppose I should call her—would have no claim to the property at all."

"Is there much of an estate?" Larry asked curiously.

Don shook his head. "Not a great deal," he answered. "Bolton ran through a considerable amount that he inherited from his brother. In fact the only thing of value left is some river-bottom land that lies along the railroad tracks north of Franklin here."

Larry's eyes widened. That would be the tract of land that had the rock house

upon it where he had lived with Archer Bolton. He had ridden past it that afternoon and looked out at the waste of *tornillo*, sand and mesquite. Value in that land?

Don answered Larry's unspoken question. "A smelter company wants to buy the tract," he said. "There is limestone there and some clay deposits. It is adjacent to the railroad. A number of mines west of here are concentrating their ore and shipping it. If the smelter can locate here at Franklin it will be a great thing. They have offered a hundred thousand dollars for the tract but it is in litigation and—"

"And they won't buy unless it's clear," completed Larry. "And you're helping get title to it for the Bolton kids?"

Don nodded. "Did you know them when you were here?" he asked. "Archer Bolton or Constance or DeWitt or Mrs. Seemans?"

"I might have known some of them a little," said Larry cautiously.

Don, removing a watch from his vest pocket, looked at it uneasily. "I think," he began, "Judge Lester is expecting us to dinner and—"

"You go on and tell him I won't be there," directed Larry. "You can come back and eat with me. We've got a lot of talking to do, Don. A whole lot."

"If you won't mind," said Don. "I really ought to tell the Judge that you won't be there. He was expecting you, Larry—looking forward to meeting you."

Larry shrugged. "You run along and tell him," he commanded. "And come back, Don."

"I'll be back," Don promised, and opening the door, smiled at Larry and went on out of the room.

CHAPTER XVI

TWO MEN AND THE LAW

WHEN the door had closed behind his brother, Larry removed his coat and vest and unfastened his collar and tie. Then he lay back on the bed and stared at the ceiling. There were so many things to think about. Don's allying himself with Judge Lester. Larry did not like that at all. He scowled at the ceiling. And then there were the Boltons—Archer Bolton, and the girl Constance, and the boy DeWitt. Larry remembered them well. And Mrs. Andrews with the thin, handsome face, and Clark Andrews who would have liked to help a homeless waif and dared not; and old Duck Bunn and—Larry lay still a long time while the shadows lengthened outside.

Presently Larry rose from the bed and removed his shoulder harness and shirt, casually inspecting the wide bandage that swathed his middle.

He washed, and was putting on a fresh shirt when there came a knock on the door.

"Yes?"

"Gentleman down in the lobby to see you, Mr. Blue," came the answer.

"I'll be right down," called Larry, working with the bow of his tie.

Don was waiting in the lobby. With him was a girl dressed in cool gray silk who stood, laughing up at him. Larry reached the bottom of the stairs and crossing the lobby approached Don and his companion. The girl turned with a smile as Larry arrived and Don, bowing, made introduction.

"Constance, may I present my brother, Larry? Larry, this is Miss Bolton. She—"

"I returned with Don to insist that you come with us." The girl laid one gloved hand on Larry's arm, her black eyes meeting his blue ones. "Don said you were tired and that you needed rest, but I made him bring me. We have all heard so much about Don's brother that we just couldn't wait to know you better. You will come, won't you?"

"I—" Larry began.

"Please come." Constance Bolton smiled. She had been denied little in her life and she did not now expect refusal. Larry stared at her. Under his scrutiny the color flooded her cheeks and she looked away.

"I can't refuse so pressing an invitation, Miss Bolton," Larry said slowly.

The girl looked back at him. "I knew

that Don and I could persuade you. Shall we go?"

In the barouche the girl settled herself, Don beside her. Larry, taking the opposite seat, held himself bolt upright as the carriage rolled away.

"Do you find Franklin changed, Mr. Blue?" questioned Constance. "Don says that he didn't remember it at all when he came back. I suppose there is a great deal of difference?"

"A good deal," Larry agreed gravely.

The barouche stopped before a long adobe house at the top of the hill. The driver opened a wooden gate that gave egress to a patio. Judge Lester came forward, gray-haired, with deep lines etched in his face but with a pair of the steadiest blue eyes that Larry had ever seen.

"We brought him, Uncle Judge," Constance announced.

John Lester held out a fine, blue-veined hand. "I'm glad that you have come, Mr. Blue," he said courteously.

Perforce Larry took the extended hand, held it briefly.

Candles flickered on the table set in the patio; dusk had come. Judge Lester indicated a chair. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Blue? Don tells me that you are recovering from a wound. Did your trip tire you?"

Larry found himself in the chair, his hat taken by a soft-footed servant who appeared and retired into the shadows. "I am not tired," he said. "Thank you for asking me to come, Judge Lester."

Lester waved away the thanks. Constance came from the house, her silk dress rustling softly, and from a door in the rear of the patio a servant appeared bearing a tray and glasses. "DeWitt will be here in a moment," announced the girl.

THERE was sherry in the thin glasses on the tray. While the servant passed the wine, a man, tall, dark-haired, handsome in the candlelight, came from the house. He took a glass from the tray as he passed, and joined the others. Larry rose from his chair.

"Mr. Bolton, Mr. Blue," Judge Lester made the introduction.

DeWitt Bolton nodded and smiled at Larry, making no motion toward Larry's half-extended hand. Larry, turning slightly, lifted his glass. As he sipped the sherry he watched the others.

"You are going out, DeWitt?" asked Judge Lester.

"I have an engagement," DeWitt answered carelessly.

"I'm sorry," Lester said. "I had hoped—"

Without waiting for Lester to complete his sentence DeWitt crossed the patio and placing his glass on a small table, spoke to the silent footed servant who had once more appeared. "Is dinner served, Juan?"

"Come, Mr. Blue," directed Lester, turning from DeWitt. "I had dinner served in the patio. I thought it would be cooler and here on the hill we have no mosquitoes. Come, Constance. Donald."

Seated at Judge Lester's right, with Constance across the table from the host and Don beside him, Larry looked at his companions. DeWitt was boldly handsome, echoing his sister's features and coloring. His forehead was good, broad and intelligent; his eyes were well placed, but there was a touch of petulance, a little weakness about the mouth and chin. Constance looked at Don, smiling at him, and Don, returning that look, fell into conversation with the girl. Judge Lester, gravely courteous, spoke to Larry, asking him questions that Larry answered somewhat absently.

When the meal was finished DeWitt excused himself and went into the house. Constance announced that she would leave the men with their cigars in the patio, and she also went in. Larry could hear her voice drifting out and DeWitt's deeper voice answering her. Presently a door closed and the voices ceased. Don rose from the table and put his hand on Larry's shoulder.

"I'll be back in a moment," he said. "Excuse me." Don too went into the house. Larry, turning back to Judge Lester, found

the judge holding out a cigar. "Thank you," said Larry. "I'll smoke a cigarette."

He rolled a thin cigarette, lit it from the candle that Lester held out to him, and puffed reflectively.

Judge Lester spoke softly. "You don't like me, Mr. Blue." Not a question, simply a statement of fact.

"No," Larry agreed, "I don't."

"I am sorry." Lester, having lighted his cigar, held it in his long fingers. "I had hoped that you would."

"It makes no difference to you," stated Larry.

"You are wrong. It does make a difference.

"Why?"

"Because of Don," Lester answered. "And because—perhaps . . ."

"You sentenced my father to hang." Larry took a deep inhale from his cigarette. "That was your duty, maybe. I don't know. I've always thought that if he had had a smart lawyer he would have got off. My father was no good, I guess. He drank and he didn't look after his boys, but—"

"Still he was your father," finished Lester evenly.

"Yes."

"And so you wanted Don to be a lawyer?"

"Yes, I did. I don't know why exactly. I suppose I had some idea of his coming back here and putting it over on you. I don't know. I was a kid and kids have wild ideas."

"And now Don has come back and gone into partnership with me."

"And I don't like it."

Again silence interposed. Then Lester spoke again. "Are you going to try to take Don?" he asked.

"What would you do?" Larry asked.

Lester looked at the glowing end of his cigar. "I don't know," he answered. "I can give Don—"

"Don says he owes everything to you now." There was a trace of bitterness in Larry's voice.

The cigar end made a little glowing arc as Lester waved it. "That is not true, of course," he said. "He owes what he is to you. I have tried to help Don."

"Why?"

"BECAUSE I felt that I should." Lester's voice was strained. "When I was on the bench, Mr. Blue, I believed that the Law was right. I believed that I should cleave to the letter of the Law. Then my wife"—the voice softened—"died. I learned that there was no mercy in the Law; either the man-made law or the higher one.

"Since that time I have tried to temper the law as I met it, tried to make it fit the facts and the occasion. Father Paul, as long as he lived, helped me. The law, through me, had deprived you and your brother of your father. I tried, as I could, to make amends. I did what I could for Don and I searched for you. I had hoped . . ."

"What did you want of me?"

"I didn't find you. Does it matter?"

"No," Larry agreed, after a moment, "it doesn't matter now."

The candles guttered in a little vagrant breeze. The night air was soft. "And so—?" said Larry.

"And so Don has come to be with me, a partner in my business and my heir when I die," Lester finished.

"Have you told him that?"

"About the business, yes; the other, no."

"Are you going to tell him?"

"I intended to," answered Lester after a momentary pause. "Now I don't think I shall. I want you to take Don with you, Mr. Blue."

Larry was shocked to silence. After a moment he got out one word: "Why?"

"Because"—Lester's voice was a drawl—"I—you saw Don with Constance, Mr. Blue?"

Instantly Larry jumped to conclusions. "You don't think Don is good enough for her," he challenged.

Lester shook his head. "That is not true," he refuted. "If you could take

them both I would be pleased. I have come to love Constance as my own daughter, but if she and Don . . ." He let the words trail off.

"Then what is it?" Larry snapped.

"This trouble over the Bolton estate," said Lester slowly. "Mrs. Seemans is trying to get a share of the estate. Archer Bolton died intestate and Constance and DeWitt are his heirs. I—"

"Don said something about it," Larry interrupted. "Why would you like Don to pull out?"

"Because Mrs. Seemans has engaged George Whiteman as her attorney," Lester stated positively. "I am afraid for Don."

"Why?"

"You don't know George Whiteman," answered Lester. "Whiteman is dangerous, Mr. Blue. He came here a few months ago and already he has acquired a reputation. Whiteman was a thief, a road agent, and a murderer. He was arrested for robbing the mails and sent to Leavenworth. While there he studied law. Somehow he was pardoned.

"When he got out he took the examinations in Austin and was admitted to the bar. He came back here and joined Seemans. Seemans is a politician of the worst type. He is our mayor. He controls the marshal's office, the city council, and the police force. Franklin is wide open, Mr. Blue. The gambling dens, every form of vice that exists, pay tribute to Seemans and when there is trouble Whiteman defends the case.

"He lost a case, his first one. Two days later he killed the man that opposed him. That cannot be proved but it is common knowledge.

"There is not a lawyer in Franklin or in this judicial district who will take a case against Whiteman. A jury cannot be impaneled that will bring in a verdict against him. And that is not all: Seemans has had Whiteman appointed as prosecutor."

"It seems to me that you would do something about that," drawled Larry. "A town that has enough backbone to stand up for what's right can be decent if it wants to be."

IN THE dusk Larry could not see Lester flush. "We have done something," the lawyer said presently. "We have a citizens' committee here but so far we have not accomplished much. Personally I wrote to the attorney-general and to the governor. I know them both. I asked that the Rangers be sent in to clean up the town. I received letters thanking me for my information and promising an investigation; but the matter has gone no further.

"Seemans is a politician. He controls a good many votes and of course the governor and the attorney-general are elected officials." The old man's voice was bitter as he spoke the last sentence. It was an indictment.

"And the Federal people?" Larry asked. "How about them?"

"Seemans and Whiteman do not commit Federal offenses," Lester answered. "They stay clear. Why should they get into trouble when there is a rich field for them to work without that?"

Larry nodded "Seemans runs the police and helps elect the district judge and he and Whiteman sit back and skim the cream," he recounted slowly. "I've seen it done. My pardner and I pay out considerable in Denver just for that sort of thing. We have to. It's part of our business."

The slow motion of Lester's head was Larry's only answer and Larry went on: "And you'd like me to get Don out of it," he said. "Don is all wrapped up in this girl and he'll go through with this case, and you're afraid that Whiteman will come down on him. Is that it?"

Again Lester nodded.

"What would you do if Don left? Throw up the case?"

"No." Lester shook his head. "I wouldn't do that."

"You'd let Whiteman come down on you then?"

"Perhaps. I wish that you could get Don to go back to Denver with you, Mr.

Blue. At least for awhile. I think . . ."

Constance Bolton's voice came from the door. "Uncle Judge, will you and Mr. Blue come in now? Don has promised to sing if I play for him. We are in the music room."

Judge Lester arose. "Shall we go in, Mr. Blue?" he asked courteously.

CHAPTER XVII

BEING OF SOUND MIND . . .

IT WAS twelve o'clock before Judge Lester's carriage delivered Larry Blue and his brother at the door of the Plaza Hotel. Larry, descending to the sidewalk, spoke to Don. "Come on up awhile," he urged. "We've hardly got to talk yet."

Don looked at the driver. "What about—?" he began.

"You can take a cab home," said Larry. "Come on in."

Telling the judge's driver that he need not wait, Don accompanied his brother into the Plaza's lobby. In Larry's room, Don took a chair and Larry relaxed upon the bed. Propped up by pillows and with his hands locked behind his blond head, he looked at Don. Don's lips were curved in a half smile as he watched his brother with bright blue eyes.

"You've come a long way, Don," Larry said suddenly. "A mighty long way . . . Remember our last talk when I took you out to Father Paul's?"

Don nodded. "Father Paul," he said, a tinge of reverence in his voice. "I owe a lot to that old man, Larry. He wrote me regularly before he died. He was—"

"A mighty fine man," Larry said softly.

"Did you know that he looked for you?" Don asked. "He came to town to find you. Asked the sheriff and the marshal both to make a search, and looked all over town himself. He wanted to adopt you when he adopted me."

Larry nodded absently. "I didn't know at the time," he said. "You wrote me about it. Remember?" Larry smiled and then chuckled softly. "That was what Seemans wanted of me, I reckon," he said. I wasn't letting Seemans find me though. I'd rolled some beer barrels down on Seemans when he was laying for a man, and I was scared to death of him. I surely hid out."

"You must have covered some country after you left here," said Don when the laughter was spent. "I never did know just where you went."

"I went around," Larry said slowly. "I stayed close to here for a time and then I picked up with a trapper. I stayed with him until he was killed." A momentary savagery crossed Larry's face. Don, watching closely, caught that glimpse of ferocity and almost recoiled from it.

Then Larry's face was smooth once more and his voice, passionless, went on. "I tied up with a cow outfit," he continued. "Punched cattle for awhile and then got to riding race horses and then into cards. I've been with them ever since."

"Your partner, Mr. Truman, wrote to me," announced Don. "I have his letter at the office. He must be quite a man."

Larry Blue nodded. "Royal will do," he said, and then, more slowly, "Royal will do to take along."

Don Blue did not realize it but he had just heard spoken the highest appreciation that Larry was capable of giving. The tone had been casual, the words prosaic, a miracle of understatement. Don seized what he thought was his moment.

"Why don't you sell out up there?" he asked, easily. "Why don't you get your money out of your partnership and come down here? You and I could be together then. I know of a dozen chances where a man could invest his capital in good, respectable business ventures. How much could you put into a business, Larry?"

Larry caught the word, "respectable," and a glint of amusement showed on his face, then vanished. "I suppose I've got a hundred thousand," he drawled. "I own a piece in a mine or two. Royal and I have a livery barn in Denver that does pretty well. We own two saloons and a restaurant, and then of course"—Larry spoke slowly—"there's the card rooms."

"Why—" Don was flustered. "I had no idea, Larry. I had no idea that you were engaged in so many things. I thought that you were—"

"A gambler?" finished Larry. "I am. That's what makes me money."

"But these other ventures. Surely they—"

"They're side lines," Larry said succinctly. "I gamble for a living. You want me to sell out and come down here. I can't quite see it that way. Royal and I make a pretty good team. Royal has put me on my feet and in a way I've put Royal on his. You see, Royal thought that he had to look after me."

THERE was the explanation, simple enough as it stood. Nothing said about the bond of friendship between the two, Royal Truman and Larry Blue. Simple: "Royal thought he had to look after me." And to look after Larry Blue, Royal Truman had sunk every dollar that he could into sound hard business ventures and gone back to the card tables, the faro layouts, and the roulette wheels to make more. And Larry? Larry had looked after Royal, too.

Don digested Larry's statement in silence. Larry gave him time to think and then spoke again. "You've made your proposition," he said gently. "Are you ashamed of me because I'm a gambler, Don?"

"No!" Don's answer came quickly, almost fiercely; perhaps too quickly and too fiercely. Larry did not notice that. "No," was answer enough and it pleased him.

"Now I'll make you one," Larry drawled. "You come back with me. Shake this two-bit business here. Come on back to Denver. Things are stirring in Denver, and I'm in them. You'll have all the law you can practice in thirty days. In a year you can run for office if you want to. I know the right people and Royal knows those I don't. How would you like to be governor or a United States senator some day, kid?"

Here was temptation. Don Blue was an ambitious young man. There, lolling on the bed was his brother, a brother that he had not seen for a long time and a man who held out those things that any ambitious young man might crave. And, looking at Larry, Don knew that Larry's proposal was no idle talk. Larry Blue would go through. All Don had to do was say, "Yes."

Don shook his head. "I can't, Larry," he answered.

"Not good enough for you?" Larry's eyes narrowed.

Again Don's blond head was shaken. "You don't understand," he said. "It isn't that I don't want the things you've talked about. It isn't that. But—you were at Judge Lester's tonight, Larry."

Larry flushed a little. "It's not good enough," he repeated. "Let me tell you Don. Royal and I have sat at the governor's table. The mayor of Denver calls me Larry. His wife invites me to their home. You think—"

Again Don shook his head. "No," he said and a touch of the fierceness that lay under Larry's eyes were echoed in Don's. "I've got to make this myself. I've got to—"

"Young lawyers don't make it themselves," Larry said cynically. "What you mean is that you'll take from Lester what you won't take from me."

Silence fell upon the two. Don broke it. "You're unfair," he said hotly. "You're unfair to me and to Judge Lester. I won't take anything from him that I wouldn't take from you, but I've come down here to help in this Bolton matter. I—"

"If the Bolton matter was cleaned up you'd go with me?" Larry's eyes were hard and shrewd and keen.

Don made a little, petulant gesture. "You make it hard, Larry," he said. "I'm here. Judge Lester has taken me in as his partner. Awhile ago when I suggested that you come down here you turned me down short enough. Now you want me to give up what I have and come with you."

"To have more," Larry said, implacably.

"What is it, kid? Out with it! Are you ashamed of me?"

"No! It's just that I— Damn it, Larry, won't you see?"

ON THE bed Larry stirred, bringing his hands from behind his head and reaching into his vest pockets for corn husks and tobacco. He twisted a thin smoke and held out the makings to Don. Don shook his head and pulled out a cigar. Both men lit their smokes.

"I'm kind of dumb," said Larry. "I guess I'm kind of dumb. Well, kid, we won't press it. I'll be here a few days and visit with you and you come up to Denver and visit me. Some day we'll get together."

Relief flooded Don's face. "That's the talk," he said. "You come to the office tomorrow, Larry. We'll have lunch together and then take half a day off and go around and look up all the places that we used to know when we were kids. Come about ten o'clock."

"I'll do that," Larry agreed.

"I've got to go now." Don got up from his chair. "Constance is sitting up waiting for DeWitt. DeWitt is having an affair with a show girl and it worries Constance. I generally—"

"You like her a heap, don't you?" Larry swung his feet over the edge of the bed and sat up.

Don colored. "I like her," he agreed.

Larry made a little humming, "Mmm," under his breath. "Who is DeWitt tied up with?" he asked.

"A girl named Bondreaux," answered Don. "She is the prima donna, with that traveling troupe here. From what I learn, half of the gamblers and highbinders in town are following her. She—" Don stopped and colored, realizing what he had said.

Larry laughed. "You go on home to your girl, kid," he commanded gently. "You and I will get together tomorrow."

The two shook hands at the door in parting and Larry watched Don as he passed down the corridor to the stairs. When Don was gone Larry closed the door and, as a matter of habit, placed a chair under the knob. He undressed slowly and when the light was out and he lay in bed, he stared up at the velvety blackness above him, his mind busy.

He had offered Don a good deal and Don had turned it down. In a way that pleased Larry. Don was a man and wanted to stand on his own two feet. When Judge Lester put in his word perhaps Don would change.

But Don was proud and despite his protestations Don was a little ashamed of Larry. Larry knew men and he believed that he understood Don. There was still some Eastern stiffness in Don. Give him a little time. And what was it Don had said about DeWitt? DeWitt was having an affair with a girl named Bondreaux. Into Larry Blue's mind that name brought a recollection, a recollection of a blond-headed sprite of a girl with dark eyes. A girl who followed him like a shadow. Annette Bondreaux! Larry wondered if this girl, this girl that DeWitt was pursuing, could possibly be Annette. Thinking of her he drowsed off.

Larry Blue awakened at eight. He stretched, yawned, and presently got up.

After breakfast, he made a leisurely way to the two-story brick building that housed the law offices of John Lester.

LARRY went upstairs, and entered an anteroom. Two rooms led off the anteroom and from one of these came voices. Larry, standing in the waiting room, heard Don's deep voice and the quieter, lighter voice of Lester. Presently Don came out, saw Larry, and, crossing to him, shook hands and gave a greeting.

"I have some business to talk over with the judge," he said. "Come into my office and wait for me. I won't be long."

Larry followed Don into the second of the two rooms. Don took a file of papers from the desk, excused himself and entered Lester's office. Larry sat down behind the desk. Through the open doors of the next office the voices resumed their humming.

Larry had nothing to do but wait. He rolled a cigarette and lit it. He toyed with the letter opener and the paper weights on Don's desk. Still the voices hummed on.

Looking about, Larry's eyes fell upon a letter on the desk. Here was a letter to Don in what looked like Larry's own handwriting. But the first few words told him that this was not of his writing. Larry turned the sheet and on the back saw the signature, *Archer Bolton.*

An amused smile crossed Larry's face. Pulling a sheet of blank foolscap toward him, Larry dipped a pen and wrote a sentence, then held up the letter and what he had written, for comparison. They were identical. Larry wrote another line and again made comparison. Word for word, letter for letter, flourish for flourish, the words on the two sheets, echoed each other. Archer Bolton! Archer Bolton had taught him to write.

Larry's mind flashed back to those days in the rock house, to the weary hours of meticulous copying there, to the days when old Jim Cardwine had bent down over his shoulder as Larry strove to copy the exercises that Archer Bolton had set. How careful Jim had been that Larry make an exact duplicate. Nothing but perfection would suit the old trapper!

Steps sounded in the anteroom and hastily, almost guiltily, Larry put down the pen and swung in the swivel chair so that he looked out the window.

"Tired of waiting?" asked Don from the door. "I won't be long now, Larry. Judge Lester wants some papers from the Bolton file. Tell me: Why will a man as smart as Archer Bolton be fool enough not to make a will?"

"I don't know," Larry answered. "Maybe he did. Have you been through everything he left?"

"Time and again." Don was going through a thick envelope. "If he made a will we would not have missed it."

"But you might have," said Larry, casually, hiding the gleam in his eyes. "It might be inside something that you hadn't unfolded or—"

"Not a chance," Don laughed. "I'll be back in a few minutes, Larry." He went out of the office and Larry swung swiftly to the desk.

Pulling a fresh sheet of paper to him he dipped his pen and scratched busily, signing a name with a flourish at the bottom of what he wrote. Then reading it over, he shook his head. This was not right; this was too hasty. He must try again. Larry crumpled the sheets he had written, thrust them into the side pocket of his coat and again assayed his task. Once more he wrote across the sheet, his hand moving rapidly and without hesitation.

Boston, Mass.,
Jan. 1, 18—

Being of sound mind and desiring to dispose of my worldly goods, I hereby leave all my worldly possessions to my two children, Constance and DeWitt Bolton, to be shared by them equally.

Larry paused. Who should be executor of this will? Don? No, that would not do. Judge Lester? No again, for Archer Bolton would not appoint a man he did not know. The lawyer back in Boston! What was his name?

I hereby appoint Alexander Sutherland to be executor with this will attached.
Archer Bolton

LARRY waved the paper in the air. Time was short. Disregarding the fact that the ink might not have dried perfectly, he folded the document, got up from the chair, and thrust it into the envelope file from which Don had just removed documents. He had scarcely regained his chair before Don came in.

"Finished," exclaimed Don. "Wouldn't you like to visit the judge a moment?"

His face was hopeful.

Larry shook his head. "I don't suppose the judge is very keen to see me," he answered. "Why don't you go through that file again, Don?" There is a chance that you've overlooked that will. I knew Archer Bolton when I was just a kid."

Don laughed. "I tell you I've been through it twenty times."

"Twenty-one won't hurt," Larry drawled. "We've got plenty of time."

"There's no use wasting it," Don replied. Still his fingers toyed with the file even as he spoke. "I know exactly what's in there. Know it by heart. Here is a deed to the property here. Here is a certificate for some worthless stock that Bolton bought. Here is a letter that he wrote to Clark Andrews, his brother-in-law, and another to his half-sister, Luella. She is Mrs. Seemans now. Here is a—what's this?" Don pulled a sheet of paper from the file. There was no superscription on the sheet. Larry had not had time for that. Don looked at the paper and slowly, almost mechanically, unfolded it.

He wheeled and started hastily toward the door, then stopped, turned and slowly came back to the desk. "Do you know what this is?" he demanded.

Larry's face was the impassive, expressionless mask of the professional gambler. "What is it?" he asked.

"It's a will." Don's voice was vibrant. "A holograph will. Here against the back of the file. Stuck under the flap. Do you suppose—?"

He walked over to a chair and sat down, staring at the paper he held. "This leaves everything to Constance and DeWitt," he announced, not lifting his eyes from the paper. "It appoints Sutherland executor. Why—this is wonderful. This—why, this doesn't leave Seemans a leg to stand on."

"It always pays to look," drawled Larry.

"But how did you know?" Don's eyes were two bright slits leveled at Larry above the paper. "How did you—?"

"Hunch," Larry stated flatly. "Gamblers play hunches, kid. You better take that in to Lester. That cleans this up, doesn't it? There's nothin' tying you here now."

Don got up from where he sat and crossed slowly to the desk looking down at his brother. "Larry," he said slowly, "I've seen your writing and for the last few months I've examined a good deal of Archer Bolton's. There's a smilarity between them. A great deal of similarity."

"That so?" Larry drawled.

"Yes. You want me to go north with you. You want me—Larry take a pen and a piece of paper and write what I tell you."

"Sure." Larry reached out and took a pen and paper.

"Being of sound mind and desiring to dispose of my worldly goods," Don dictated. Larry's pen scratched busily. No tremor in his hand, no attempt to change or disguise a letter or a word.

"Now give that here," Don commanded.

Larry held out the paper. Don took it, held the two sheets up before him, looked from one to the other, looked at Larry and back again. "They are idenitcal," he announced. "Larry, you wrote that will."

NOT a muscle stirred in Larry's face. His eyes met Don's locked with them, and held. "If you think so, tear it up," directed Larry Blue.

Don put the papers on the desk, face up, looked at them, and looked back at Larry. "Did you write that?" he demanded.

Larry could hardly repress a smile. Don was between the devil and the deep blue sea. He believed that Larry had written that will lying before him. And yet he could not be sure. The will had come from the file of papers containing all the documents pertaining to the Bolton case. It had been back underneath an envelope flap. It might have been overlooked in the many times those documents had been surveyed. If it was authentic, if it was truly Archer Bolton's will, then it was precious beyond belief. And if it were not; if Larry had written it, why then, what? Don did not know. Don did not tear up the will.

"Did you write that?" Don demanded again.

"Suppose I did?" Larry asked, "then what?"

"Then I'll tear it up," Don flared. "I won't be crooked, not for you, not for—"

"And suppose I didn't?" Larry drawled again.

Don hung his head. He could not meet Larry's eyes and through his own expose the turmoil of his mind.

Steps sounded in the anteroom and Judge Lester stood in the doorway. He nodded and spoke pleasantly to Larry. "Good morning, Mr. Blue. Don said that you were here. I thought that I . . . What is the matter, Don?"

Don looked up, his face strained.

Larry answered the question. "Don's coppered a bet," he said gently. "He's found a will."

"What!" The exclamation was fairly jerked from Lester. Two swift steps and he had pushed Don aside and reached the desk. Snatching up the paper he read it through and as he read, first incredulity, then surprise, and finally a great relief shown on his face. "Why, Don," exclaimed the judge. "Why—where did you find this?"

Don gestured toward the Manila file. "There," he said. "In the back under a flap."

"And we've overlooked it all this time!" Lester exclaimed. "My boy, do you realize what this means? Do you realize what this does? He leaves everything to Constance and DeWitt. Sutherland is appointed executor and I hold Sutherland's power of attorney. A holograph may not be witnessed. This—why this is perfect!" Lester's hand was on Don's shoulder now. Almost he embraced the boy.

Beneath Larry Blue's dark mustache a smile flickered briefly.

"When I show this to George Whiteman and to Luella Seemans," said John Lester, "our difficulties will be over. The smelter company will buy that river property immediately. Constance and DeWitt will have their due. Don, this, this is perfect." The judge could not keep the exultation from his voice.

Larry Blue got up from behind the desk. "I reckon," he drawled pleasantly, "that you and Don will have plenty to do now, Judge. I reckon you'll be busy. Don and I will postpone our little visit. I'll be at the hotel, Don, when you get through." He paused and smiled at his brother. "And make up your own mind, kid," he said softly.

Don followed Larry to the door. "I want to talk to you," he snapped. "I've got to talk to you, Larry. I'll come to the hotel."

"Come along," Larry urged. "We'll visit." He grinned sardonically at his brother. "And don't try to tell Lester that I wrote that will," he murmured. "He won't believe you, kid."

Don opened his mouth to speak but Larry did not wait for the words. He swung away from his brother and went on out.

CHAPTER XVIII

AGAIN GOODBYE

LARRY BLUE, emerging into the brilliant sunlight of the street, settled his black hat a little lower over his eyes and glanced at his watch. It was just past eleven o'clock. Turning east on the board sidewalk that stretched before the office building, Larry walked along smiling to himself. He wondered as he walked, what Don would do. Larry shrugged. Judge Lester would probably govern Don's actions and Larry had no doubt as to how the judge would proceed. That will, forgery that it was, was as good as probated right now!

The sun directly overhead beat down hotly. Larry slowed his brisk pace and looked up and down the street. As though in answer to that look a cab rounded the corner and came toward him. This was not a new cab, nor were the horses particularly spirited. The driver, a portly figure, had laid aside his coat, and suspenders were outlined against a none too clean white shirt. The driver's hair was gray under his plug hat. His nose was bulbous and shining with something other than sunburn. From cheeks and chin a stubble of gray beard sprouted.

The driver swung the vehicle toward the curb. "Cab?" he asked.

In answer Larry opened the door and climbed in. Half of the cab top was rolled back, giving from the back seat a view of the driver's perspiring neck and his soiled collar. Larry, settling back on the worn cushions, automatically avoiding a broken spring, looked up through the opening.

"I'll go to the Plaza," he said.

For answer the driver grunted and the horses moved ahead.

Larry surveyed the neck and collar before him. They were familiar; oddly reminiscent. Another cab passing to the left, rattled by, its driver hailing Larry's coachman. "Hi, Duck."

Larry's driver raised his whip in response.

"Are you Duck Bunn?" Larry asked, leaning forward.

Upon the seat the neck wrinkled as it turned. "What if I am?" demanded a gruff voice.

Larry Blue smiled. "Not a thing," he returned. "You cooked for the Cross C one time, didn't you?"

"And if I did?" Antagonism in the question.

"Did Archer Bolton ever come back?" Larry pursued.

The driver said, "Whoa!" squirmed around on the seat and peered through the open cab top. "Who," he demanded, "in the hell are you?"

Larry chuckled. "The last time I saw you you were riding an English saddle and swearing because there wasn't anything under you. Remember, Duck?"

Duck Bunn's bewhiskered face disappeared. The cab creaked and rocked as he came down from his seat, then eyes wide with incredulity, the face was thrust into the open window beside Larry.

"Danged if you ain't Larry Blue!" ejaculated Duck Bunn.

Larry held out his hand. Duck took it after wiping his own palm on the seat of his pants. They shook hands solemnly and gradually Duck's wrinkled face creased into a smile that echoed Larry's own.

"By gosh," said Duck, "you made it, didn't you? I figgered you'd been hung or somethin'. How are you, Larry?"

"Pretty good, Duck," Larry answered. "And you?"

"I make out," Duck said. "I eat pretty regular an' sleep good. What's brung you back to Franklin?"

"A little business. Have you been here all the time, Duck? When did you leave the Cross C?"

"When Clark Andrews died. I couldn't stand that hellcat of a wife he had, so I pulled out. Then she sold the ranch and the new man had his own crew."

"Been driving a hack ever since then?"

"Not all the time. I've been here an' there. Been in Franklin since the railroads come in. Yo're lookin' prosperous, Larry."

"I've made a little."

Duck pulled a plug of chewing tobacco from a pocket, eyed it, brushed it off and offered it to Larry. When Larry shook his head, Duck gnawed off a corner, got the chew under control, and spat.

"Didja ever see old Jim Cardwine again?" he asked, returning the plug to his pocket. "Old Jim thought a lot of you, kid."

"I saw him." Larry's answer was brief. "I lived with him a couple of years. He's dead. What happened to Bolton, Duck? Did he ever come back?"

Duck shook his head and spat again. "Naw, he never come back," he said. "How long you goin' to be here, Larry?"

"For a while. I don't know just how long for sure. I'm stopping at the Plaza."

Duck nodded. "An' I better be takin' you there," he stated. "If you want a cab while yo're in town, Larry, I got a place in that cab rack up by the corner close to the hotel. I ain't got the best cab in town, but—"

"It's plenty good enough for me," stated Larry Blue, "and I want you to drive me."

Duck nodded his satisfaction, grinned at Larry, and climbed back up on the seat. "Giddap!" he ordered. And then turning, looked back through the open top. "Any time or anywhere, Larry," he announced, "I'll be on hand."

IN HIS room, Larry removed his coat and as he did so a paper crackled in his pocket. With a grin he reached in a hand and produced the crumpled sheets. Lighting a match he touched the flame to the papers and held them until the heat burned his fingers. Then hanging his coat over the back of a chair he crossed the room to the bed and sat down.

Passing the desk on his way to the dining room that noon a thought struck Larry and he addressed the clerk. "I heard there's a show in town. Any good?"

The clerk nodded. "Best show that's been in Franklin. They built the opera house here two years ago and had Madame Patti an' some more here to open it. But this girl they've got there now has got Patti backed right off the boards. I'll tell you, Mr. Blue, she's all right."

Larry smiled. "What's her name?"

"Annette Bondreaux. Sing? Say! An' looks! An—"

"Umm," said Larry. "That way, is it?"

The clerk leaned forward earnestly. "I don't know, you understand," he confided, "but they say that she's got half the men in town on her string. This young Bolton that lives up at Judge Lester's and George Whiteman, and I guess the mayor himself, only he's afraid of his wife."

"You don't say!" said Larry. "Where does she stay? Here?"

"No." The clerk shook his head. "The whole troupe stays down at the Oxford. It's a kind of cheap dump down by the station. I told the boss when they came, I said, 'Mr. Carmichael, it would be good advertising for the Plaza if we had that theater troupe up here. We could give them rates and they'd bring business to the house.' But he couldn't see it that way."

Larry said, "Thanks," briefly, and went on to the dining room.

When Duck Bunn halted his cab before the Plaza Hotel at two o'clock, Larry gave directions. "I want to go down to the Oxford, Duck," he said. "I'll stop there awhile. You wait for me."

The Oxford Hotel was frame and its third story was a false front. The Plaza was; the Oxford had been. Leaving the cab at the curb Larry went into the tawdry lobby.

The clerk at the desk was a native who stared long and hard at Larry Blue. Larry asked if he might see Miss Bondreaux. The clerk was bland, polite, and adamant. Miss Bondreaux was in her room and had asked not to be distrurbed.

"You tell her that there's an old friend of hers in the lobby," he ordered. The green edge of a bill shown under the hand that Larry placed on the counter.

"For an ol' friend Mees Bondreaux ees een," the clerk beamed, his hand sliding out toward the bill. "I weel tell her. She ees esleep most of the afternoon—"

"You get that when you come back," stated Larry. "I want to see Miss Bondreaux."

The clerk's smile changed to a frown, returned with renewed force, and he scurried out from behind the desk. Larry leaned against the counter, waiting. The clerk came back down, reached for the bill and said: "*Numero* twenty-two, *sçñor*."

Larry nodded, and turned toward the stairs.

Upstairs he went along the corridor, stopped at a numbered door and knocked. A voice said: "Come in," and turning the knob Larry entered. Annette Bondreaux sat on a chair across the room, beside the opened window. The room was stifling hot and only the tiny fluttering of the dingy curtain told of stirring air.

Annette had drawn her long silken robe close about her when the summons came at the door, and now holding it closed with one small hand, she stared at her visitor. The robe did not completely conceal the softly rounded curves of shoulders and breasts, and opened at the throat, exposed the ivory pillar of the girl's throat. Annette's blond hair was cut short and curled in damp ringlets, making a golden frame for her face. Larry, looking at that face, met the deep darkness of the girl's eyes and looked no further.

"Larry! Larry Blue!" She made a little gesture with her free hand as one will who brushes aside an apparition, and then very slowly she came to her feet. "Larry!" she exclaimed again.

Larry Blue found that there was a choke in his throat as he tried to speak. The words he wanted would not come. He took a step toward the girl, his hand automatically pushing shut the door behind him. Annette, great, dark eyes staring, stood motionless.

Larry got out words. "Annette! It's me. I'm—" He got no further. With one swift motion the girl was across the room, her hands on Larry's shoulders, her head against his chest.

"Larry," she sobbed. "Larry!"

FOR an instant Larry Blue felt the soft warmth of her body against him, felt the silken smoothness of her shoulders as his arms went up and his hands rested on them. Then the girl pushed herself back, tilted her face up to his and looked into his eyes. "I—" she began. "Why, Larry, I never thought it would be you. I never thought I would see you again. The clerk said that there was a gambler in the lobby that wanted to see me, a man who said that he was an old friend. I—it is you, Larry? You're really Larry Blue?"

Larry pushed the girl away now and holding her by her shoulders smiled down into her upturned face. "It's really me," he assured. "Larry Blue. But I never thought that I'd find you, Annette. I heard that there was an Annette Bondreaux in town with the theatrical troupe. Just on the chance that it might be you, I came—"

"And found me!" Now that she had regained her poise Annette freed herself from Larry's hands, standing clear of him. "Sit down, Larry. It has been a long time since we saw each other. A long time." She laughed, a treble, tinkling trill. "Remember?" she continued, "remember the last time I saw you, and how we ran?"

Larry smiled. He took the chair the girl indicated, sat down and placed his hat upon his knees. Annette, crossing the room from him, sat down upon the bed, arranged her robe about her and swung one small, slippered foot. "How you have changed," she said. "I remember— Did you do all the things that you planned, Larry? Did you send Don to school and make a lawyer of him? Did you—?"

"I did some of the things," Larry interrupted the flow of questions. "Some I didn't do. And you, Annette? How do you come to be here? What has happened to you? How have you been?"

Annette shrugged. Her wide, mobile mouth made a small grimace that was instantly erased. "I am here because I am the singer with Sam Levine's troupe," she said. "We are on tour. As for what has happened to me—" Again she shrugged.

Larry looked about the little room. It was typical of the Oxford and of a thousand hotels like the Oxford. Annette, following his eyes, spoke the thing that he was thinking.

"Not very fine, Larry. But good enough for a singer in a fourth-rate troupe."

The bitterness in her voice was a shock to Larry. Again he looked closely at the girl, his eyes a little narrowed. "Tell me about it, Annette," commanded Larry suddenly. "Tell me."

Something in the words, some force of tone or inflection, reached through the hardness that the girl had momentarily thrown about herself. The dark eyes softened. "You can see," she said with a small gesture of her white hand. "My father was killed. *Maman*"—Larry started as he recalled how Annette had always used that word in reference to her mother —"took me to Chicago where we had relatives. I worked in a café for awhile after I was old enough. Then *maman* died. My aunt—" Again a shrug expressed more than words. "Well, I was young and I had a little voice. I thought that I could sing. I went into a chorus in a burlesque show. One of the principals became ill and I took her place. Since then I have—

But why are we talking about me, Larry. What of you?"

"How long have you been with this outfit?" Larry demanded, disregarding the question. "Do they treat you all right?"

Again the little gesture with the hands, and a shrug. "I am the principal with the troupe," Annette answered. "I sing and I dance a little and I am paid for it. I live well enough. Now, Larry— What are you doing here? Why are you in Franklin? What has happened to you since that night that we ran?"

Larry grinned. Mentally he resolved that he would make things easier for Annette. Principal with the company or not, he did not like these surroundings. Annette was—Annette deserved better than this. "There's nothing much to tell about me," he drawled. "I left Franklin that night we got caught out behind your father's place. I drifted around some. Wound up gambling. I've done pretty well at it."

Annette's eyes traveled over Larry, surveying him from the crown of his blond head to the tips of his expensive, shop made boots. She nodded. "You have done well," she agreed. "And why did you come to Franklin?"

"To see Don," Larry answered frankly. "Don's come down here and gone into business. He's a lawyer. I want to get him to go back to Denver with me."

"And he won't go?"

"No." Larry shook his head. "He won't go. You see, Annette, there's a girl—"

"And Don will not give her up for his brother," Annette finished. "Men are foolish, Larry. I see many men and know how foolish they are."

"I'd take the girl back with him," Larry stated. "What I want is Don. I've spent most of my life trying to get Don where he is. Now I want him and he won't come."

"Have you talked with the girl?" Annette asked, colorlessly.

"No, I haven't."

"You might try, Larry," the words came slowly. "Women understand things, sometimes. I believe that a woman would understand your wanting Don. Sometimes a woman— Why don't you talk with her, Larry?"

"I'm going to," answered Larry. "Thanks, Annette. I—"

A knock on the door interrupted the rest of his sentence. Annette, rising from the bed, crossed to the door and opened it. From the hall a voice said, "Thees letter, *señorita*, ees give me for deliver. I—"

Annette said, "Thanks," and closing the door, came back into the room. "You will forgive me?" she asked.

"Go ahead," said Larry Blue.

The girl opened the note, read it through swiftly, and then crumpling the written page, tossed it to the bed. Her eyes were preoccupied with some inner thought as she turned to Larry again. Larry caught that expression.

"I've got to go now, Annette," he said, rising. "I wanted to find out if it was my Annette Bondreaux here in Franklin, and I've found out. Can you have dinner with me, or supper after the show? I—"

"Not tonight," Annette said quickly. "I have an engagement for tonight."

"No, not tonight," Larry agreed. "Don is coming to see me tonight. We'll make it another time. You set the date."

Annette hesitated. Larry thought that he understood that hesitation. He smiled. "You can get hold of me any time," he said. "I'm at the Plaza Hotel. You find out when you'll be free and drop me a note. We'll go out and look the old town over and have some fun. Goodbye, Annette."

"I'll make it soon, Larry," Annette assured him.

"Good," Larry answered, and smiling to the girl, went down the stairs.

CHAPTER XIX

RIVER DRIVE

THERE was a note for Larry at the Plaza desk, a square envelope addressed in the fine legal script that Larry

had come to recognize as Don Blue's handwriting. Don was curt and precise. Larry could not repress a smile when he read the missive. Don was angry. Larry could see the anger bristling from every word and phrase. Yet the note was pleasant reading. Don wrote that he was busy and would be engaged throughout the afternoon. Larry would understand. Larry's grin broadened. He did understand. The will that he had written, had given Don something to work on. Still, the note continued, Don wanted to see his brother and would be at the Plaza Hotel at seven.

Having finished reading Don's note, Larry unfolded the second sheet of paper that had been in the envelope. His eyes widened as he read what was written. Constance Bolton hoped that Mr. Blue would drive with her that afternoon. She would call with the carriage at four, when the sun was less inclement. Larry, after a hasty glance at his watch, fairly ran up the stairs to his room.

He was back in the lobby at four, freshly shaved for the second time that day, linen immaculate, boots shined to perfection, coat and trousers brushed and furbished. Larry's eyes were on the windows and when Judge Lester's barouche drew up before the Plaza he was at the entrance, ready to step into the street.

Still he waited until the coachman had dismounted from the seat and come into the hotel before he stepped out. Something restrained his eagerness. Larry followed the dark-skinned native out to the carriage and removing his hat, stood beside the vehicle.

Constance Bolton was a vision in yellow silk, bonnet coquettishly hiding one eye, a small black curl making a soft tendril against the rich color of her cheeks.

The girl smiled at Larry Blue. "I was afraid that you could not come, Mr. Blue," she said, looking out at Larry from beneath the bonnet brim. "Don said that you would not care to drive and did not want me to ask you, but I thought that you would like to see some of Franklin."

"I am delighted," Larry recalled the courtly manners of some of his friends and impressed them for service.

Constance made a little gesture, drawing her skirts more closely so that there was room for Larry on the seat beside her. "Then get in," she invited. "The river road, Felipe."

Larry climbed into the barouche and settled himself beside the girl. Felipe clucked to the team of matched bays, and the barouche moved away from the hotel.

Constance Bolton, while they drove, talked, keeping her eyes upon him; and Larry, for his part, watched the girl. He did not note it when they passed the Oxford Hotel, nor did he see the little party of women that stood on the walk before the hotel. One of the group, blond-haired and dark eyed, half raised her hand and then stood with turning head to watch the barouche out of sight. To that blonde haired girl another spoke.

"You don't keep your men, Annette. Wasn't that fellow here this afternoon?"

To the speaker Annette turned with flashing eyes. "Keep your tongue, Mae," she snapped.

Mae, blowsily past her beauty, made swift retort and for a moment a wordy war raged in front of the Oxford. To all of this Larry was unaware. Felipe had turned the team into a drive, a road that led between towering cottonwoods and that wound peacefully beside the muddy Rio. Constance, relaxing, leaned back against the soft cushions of the barouche and sighed.

"I love it here," she said. "It is so cool and the sun coming through the trees is like the sunlight in a cathedral."

Larry, too, leaned back. He did not note the beauty of the drive but looked still at his companion. The girl, catching that gaze, flushed rosily.

"You must think a great deal of Don, Mr. Blue," she said suddenly. "Coming down here from Denver to see him. Don says that you are in business in Denver. He is very proud of you."

"I'm proud of Don," said Larry quietly.

Constance Bolton turned so that she faced Larry. "I want to thank you," she said. "Don told us at noon that it was your insistence that led him to make a last search in our step-father's papers. It was then that he found the will that was left. If it had not been for you—"

"He would have found it," Larry said.

"But DeWitt and I are grateful," persisted Constance. "It means a great deal to us, of course. Tell me: Why were you so sure that stepfather had left a will?"

Larry felt himself on dangerous ground. He sought to escape it. I suppose that Don told you I am a gambler," he said. "Gamblers play their hunches. I just felt that there was a will there and I came out right, that's all. What are Don and Judge Lester going to do with it?"

The girl turned away and Larry had a view of her profile. "They have an engagement with my aunt and Mr. Seemans this afternoon," she replied. "Don says that they will tell them about the will and show it to them, and then the legal business will be finished. I do not like my aunt, Mr. Blue. When we first came here we stayed with her. She and DeWitt quarreled, and of course I took DeWitt's part. We moved then to Judge Lester's home."

Larry nodded. "Mrs. Seemans will drop her claim when she sees the will," he observed sagely. "That will clean up all the legal business."

Constance nodded thoughtfully.

THE barouche rolled into an opening among the cottonwoods and then back among the trees again. "I'd like Don to go back to Denver with me," said Larry bluntly. "I want him there. I can do things for Don in Denver."

Constance looked searchingly at Larry, then glanced away. "You have been doing things for Don all your life," she said softly. "Don has told me about them."

Larry brushed that aside. "Don's all I have," he said. "Who else would I do things for?"

Again that swift sidelong glance. "You might do some things for Larry Blue," the girl reminded him. "It seems to me—" She let the words trail off.

"I have done things for myself." Larry's words were sturdy. "I've come along. I'm not much, but I have come along." The finish of the speech was almost apologetic, almost a plea to the girl to see that Larry Blue had advanced.

Turning now so that she faced him fully Constance smiled at the man. "Tell me," she commanded. "Tell me about what you have done. I have heard Don talk, and Judge Lester. Tell me."

"There isn't much to tell," Larry said awkwardly. "I've done what I had to do, that's all."

The girl made a little grimace of impatience. "I want to hear," she said. "You say that you are a gambler. What do you do? What does a gambler do? I have never met a gambler. I never knew a man that would admit he was a gambler. What do gamblers do, Mr. Blue?"

Larry's hand sought his dark mustache and brushed it nervously. His voice was constrained as he answered. "Mostly," said Larry, "they gamble."

The girl was not satisfied with that reply. With soft feminine persistence she pursued her questioning. Larry made answer. Presently he forgot his constraint, his awkwardness. Gradually, Constance Bolton uncovered Larry Blue, removed the overburden of reticence and revealed the man that lay beneath. To her Larry Blue talked as he had never talked to another and, enthralled, the girl listened.

The road had left the river bed and climbing now, emerged upon the mesa. There, following the ridges, it wound snakelike back toward Franklin. The sun was low, hovering over the blue hills west of the river, touching the tops of the Cantandos and bathing them with gold. With a last wild burst of glory the sun was gone and only the pale aftermath remained.

Larry Blue stopped talking.

"And you did that for Don?" Con-

stance's voice held a touch of awe, of incredulity as she asked the question.

"Don is my brother," Larry said simply.

The girl was thoughtful. "You must love him deeply," she said, after a moment's pause. "You must . . ." Her dark eyes, wide and bright, and still touched with the wonder of the things she had heard, met Larry's fully.

Constance's lips were parted and in her throat a pulse beat. She had been sheltered all her life. Like many another girl she had received attention, the prosaic, accustomed attentions of prosaic and busy men. Here, for the first time, she had encountered a man who was not prosaic, but elemental; a man who was a raw, ungoverned force. A man who, in following the thing he believed right, would kill or be killed cheerfully because of the force within him.

Larry had told his story in the parsimonious, understated phrases of the westerner, but Constance Bolton, listening, had heard the wild song of the frontier beating through the mundane sentences. Almost instinctively her hand went out toward the man beside her.

Gently she touched his arm.

"You want Don," she said softly. "You would stop at nothing to have him with you. I—ah—what do I matter? I—"

This girl was Don's! Larry remembered that. Larry Blue kept his hands upon his knees, his fingers tight-clenched. Don loved her! Don—

The barouche lurched. On the seat Felipe yelled. Something, perhaps a snake in the road, perhaps some vagrant shadow, had frightened the team of trotters. The horses, curvetting, reared as one and left the road. Felipe had been dreaming, paying no attention to his horses. Now his inattention was repaid. The reins were jerked from his hands. The horses, out of the road, lunged forward. A front wheel struck a rock. With the lurch Felipe was thrown from the seat and the bays, uncontrolled, went wildly out across the sagebrush flat.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Man Is but Flesh

OUT in the laboratory of the University of Oregon Doctor Edwin E. Osgood has been growing human bone marrow artificially. And the marrow has been catching pneumonia. This amazing experiment has a good deal of similarity with the Carrel-Lindbergh artificial heart. But Doctor Osgood's living marrow allows scientists to get even closer to the basis of health.

For, while the artificial heart keeps whole organs alive, this marrow grows cells—and they are what disease strikes directly. Doctor Osgood has been using the bottles of growing marrow for guinea pigs. He has been experimenting with the effects of sulfanilamide, a remarkable new drug which has cured blood poisoning and a number of germ infections. With this he doctored the diseased marrow and found that sulfanilamide, though it did not actually cure pneumonia, did assist the effects of a serum tremendously.

Live marrow growing in bottles is another step in the laboratory reconstruction of the human body. Lindbergh's artificial heart is in the New York Rockefeller Institute; the marrow is out in Oregon; and probably somewhere in Montana a scientist is pretty pleased over a mechanical brain he has tossed together. Put the pieces together and you have a synthetic American.

—*Eduard H. Ohlsson*

"Git down off them hosses!"

The Horse Trader

By JOHN RANDOLPH PHILLIPS

Author of "No Stop at Juno," "The Boss of Wildtown," etc.

If you want a horse to drink, Cass Franklin knew, you tried to keep him away from the pump. A story of the Blue Ridge country

IN THE afterglow of a March sunset the horse trader paused on the crest of a hill overlooking a long, broad valley. Tall and loose-jointed and surprisingly mature-looking for his twenty-seven years, he sat at ease in the saddle, one sinewy hand absent-mindedly caressing the sorrel mare's silky mane. A warm light began in his gray eyes and spread over his lean and weathered face. Down yonder in the valley, in Micajah Kelton's house, a light already twinkled, and up the long slope there came to him a pleasant hum of voices muted by distance.

His string of stock, two mules and three horses, having halted when the sorrel mare halted, fell to browsing along the roadside. He never led his animals, merely drove them down the road in front of him. Folks said he was uncanny with horses and mules, handling them perfectly without either leather or iron.

The Kelton house sat on a small knoll rising above the floor of the valley, and for a brief moment a slim figure was silhouetted in the back doorway. The horse trader's heart beat faster and his fingers unconsciously clenched the silky hairs of the sorrel's mane.

Dismounting, he took down two panels of the rail fence, then drove his stock into Micajah Kelton's field. Briskly he restored the fence, mounted, and rode at a swinging trot down the gentle slope. At Banjo Creek, which watered Kelton's valley, he let the sorrel and the others drink their

fill, his eyes still fixed upon that yellow star of light in the kitchen of Kelton's house.

He spoke briefly and the horses and mules trotted out ahead of him, up the slope toward Kelton's barn. As always when he approached Kelton's, the horse trader felt his nerves tingling, his heart jumping. The village of Eastern Cross lay only four miles ahead and he could easily have reached it this night, but he had been stopping with Kelton every time he was in the vicinity for over a year. And tonight, though it would doubtless prove no more satisfying than any of the other nights, he would stop there again.

A slight figure emerged from the gloom surrounding the barn: ten-year-old Benjy Kelton. He greeted the man with a whoop, turned and yelled to someone else: "It's Mr. Franklin. It's the hoss trader." Immediately three other figures appeared: old Micajah himself and his tall sons, Matt and Drury.

"How are you, Cass?" they said, in one voice.

"Middling," said the horse trader. "I'd like to spend the night, Mr. Kelton."

"Sho', sho'," said old Micajah. " 'Light. Benjy, drive them hosses and mules into the barn pasture. Two fair-looking jarheads there, Cass."

"Tolerable," said the horse trader, dismounting and beginning to unfasten the cinches of his Western saddle.

"We got spareribs for supper," Benjy shouted.

"Ain't you talking now," the horse trader cried.

"Killed a shote," old man Kelton explained. "Kinda late, but I always did like fresh po'k in the early spring. Gives a man something to lay agin' his backbone when he's breaking ground all day for corn."

"Or fighting a saddle all day," the horse trader smiled. "Yes sir, spareribs and Cass Franklin are old friends. My daddy used to say—"

"Where did your daddy live at, Mr. Franklin?" Benjy demanded.

"Well, bud, he lived in the Big Rock Candy Mountains."

THE horse trader hid a smile with the back of a careful hand. It never failed to amuse him that people in this section of Virginia considered him more or less a man of mystery. Because he was close-mouthed and did not often air his opinions, they thought of him as that imagination-tickling person, a man with a past.

"Aw, he didn't either," Benjy protested. "I never heard of them mountains."

"Well," Cass said, "maybe he didn't. But he sure used to tell me about being a fisherman in the Red Sea and a pirate off the Florida coast and a scout for George Washington when he licked the English."

"Aw, he couldn't have been your daddy if he was in that war."

"You don't mean to say, do you, bud, that at this late day I'm finding out my old daddy was a liar?"

"Go tell your mammy we got company for supper," Micajah cut in.

Benjy sped away and Cass heard his ringing shout: "We got company, Ma! Mr. Franklin's here. The hoss trader."

A smile trimmed the lean face of the horse trader. These people were no different from all the others up and down the countryside. They liked to have him come, for he brought news from distant parts of the county. He told them the latest from the county seat, twenty miles away, where he had his headquarters.

"Let's go wash up," Micajah said, when the sorrel had been stabled and fed.

"Be with you in a minute," Cass promised. Swiftly he went into the feed-room and rummaged in his saddle bags. The clothes he would wear tonight were folded in a neat bundle, which he laid carefully aside. After one cautious glance around—for the Keltons were teetotalers—he drew forth a quart of dewberry wine and drank gustily.

Coming out of the gloom into the bright yellow glow of the kitchen, the horse trader

suffered a momentary period of blindness. Then the room began to take shape. In the far corner, as usual, stood Dorinda. Nearer was the little girl, Kate, younger even than Benjy. And across the room came Ma Kelton, whose reddened hand he gripped and squeezed.

"Evening, folks," he said, looking at Dorinda.

"You men," said Mrs. Kelton, "wash up and get ready. Mr. Franklin, you can sleep in the boys' room tonight."

The horse trader said: "You're looking fine, Dorinda."

"Thanks," the girl replied. For one instant her crystal-clear blue eyes regarded him squarely from under the shock of her unruly chestnut hair, then they veered away as if dismissing him. For that one instant, it seemed to him, rebellion rode a high horse in those eyes. But now they were downcast and he was as puzzled as ever about Dorinda Kelton.

Along with the other menfolks, he made his toilet on the kitchen porch, then ran lightly up the stairs to the boys' room, and changed from boots and khaki shirt and trousers into his "Sunday" clothes. Fresh underwear, a clean white shirt, a blue tie, tan shoes, blue socks and a suit of dark gray, which, in spite of its wrinkles, pleased him enormously.

Mrs. Kelton's voice came resonantly up the stairs: "Supper's ready."

Cass took his accustomed place, to the right of old man Kelton, who sat at the head of the table. He was served first and generously—spareribs, sweet potatoes, blackeyed peas, stewed canned tomatoes and batterbread. The Keltons were known as good feeders.

"Pa's going to get an automobile," said Benjy, no longer able to suppress the great news.

EMBARRASSMENT rode a faint smile across Micajah's lips and he glanced apologetically at Cass. "Country," he said, "is getting full of them things. Fellow in one the other day mighty nigh run over me on the way to Eastern Cross. Thinks I, 'Blessed if I ain't going to get me one myself and run over somebody 'stead of them running over me.' "

"That's one way to look at it," Cass agreed. "Thinking about getting one of them myself."

"You're a rich man, ain't you, Mr. Franklin?" the unquenchable Benjy demanded.

"I light my cigars with ten-dollar bills."

Micajah chuckled and his wife tittered. Matt and Drury laughed good-naturedly at their younger brother. Even the little girl, Kate, began to giggle. Only Dorinda maintained silence. Covertly Cass studied her. "Wonder if she's made of ice," he thought, and addressed his next remark directly to her. "Miss Dorinda," he said formally, "would you pass the yams, please, ma'am?"

Her fingers touched his and there was a chill to them, and he thought: "Reckon it is ice." He helped himself liberally to the sweet potatoes, then sent them back down the table. There was an interval, then, when everyone attended to the business of eating, but at last the horse trader broke the silence: "Miss Dorinda, there was a right nice box-supper party over at the Junction last Friday night. I looked for you, but I never saw you."

"I wasn't there," the girl said.

"Would you of bid on her box," Benjy asked, "if she had been there?"

"Bud, the sky would have been the limit . . . Miss Dorinda, they're figuring on another box-supper party at Gannt's Mill next Friday night. Would you—care to go?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't," Dorinda replied. For an instant he caught the flash of her remarkable eyes, then they were focused again on her plate. "No," he thought, "it's not ice, but blessed if I know what it is."

"Dorinda," Micajah observed, "is too busy helping her ma to go gallivanting all over the country at night."

SUPPER over, the men repaired to what was called the "front room." Matt and Drury rolled cigarettes. Mica-

jah accepted a cheroot from the horse trader and asked the news from the other sections of the county. Cass gave them choice bits of gossip. Now and again his laugh rang musically in the room.

"Old Man Tutt was on another spree last week . . . The Miller boys swear they'll carry their case against Mervin Smith to the highest court, wherever that is . . . Miss Libby Wrenn has gone down to Tidewater to visit that nephew of hers . . . And by the way, Craig Arnold's wife had twins. Some poor soul that didn't know it was a double order asked how the baby was, and Craig said, 'Baby, hell! It's a whole dom litter.' "

The two older boys rocked with laughter, but Micajah spoke a rebuke. "Don't swear, Cass. It ain't never necessary."

" 'Scuse me," said the horse trader. "I let a cuss word slip every now and then and nobody's any sorrier than I am."

"Or a bigger liar," Kelton said dryly.

"Think I'll get me a drink of water," Cass said, and, rising, went into the kitchen. He had heard the old lady and Kate go out on the back porch and he was reasonably confident of finding Dorinda alone in the kitchen. Silently she handed him a dipper of water. Drinking, Cass regarded her over the dipper. There was a bloom on this girl's cheeks like none he had ever seen. It fascinated him, that and her clear eyes and her full red mouth.

"You sure, Dorinda, that you don't want to go to Gannt's Mill Friday night?"

"Callie Fox must have turned you down," the girl said.

"No," Cass told her. "You've got the advantage of her there. Seems like *you* always turn me down. Over at the Junction," he continued in a whisper, "they let us dance a while."

"I'd—I'd have liked that but—you know Pa. You'll go straight to the bad place, 'cording to him, if you dance."

"Well," Cass said, "I don't want to visit hell, but if I had to I'd rather go dancing than any other way."

For a moment he thought she was going to laugh, but her face straightened suddenly and she moved away. "I've got to finish these dishes. If Pa heard you say 'hell' to me he'd—"

"Hunt the horsewhip, I reckon. Lord, child, you don't think I'd let him hear me, do you? Give Cass *some* credit."

"You're in my way," Dorinda said. "Ma will skin me if these dishes aren't done when she and Kate get back from shutting up the chickens."

"That sure was nice dancing over at the Junction," Cass murmured reminiscently.

"I reckon you danced all the time with Callie. I heard somebody say she was pricing furniture down at the county seat the other day."

"Then I reckon she was pricing it for some other poor devil to rest his weary bones in."

"That wasn't what I heard."

"I ain't responsible for what you hear," the horse trader said. "I—"

"Please go on back and talk to Pa and the boys," Dorinda interrupted. "I'll never get through if you—"

The horse trader was gone before she could finish her sentence.

LOUNGING in his chair, he blew smoke languidly toward the ceiling, watching it curl in tiny rings. Micajah and the boys asked for more news and he gave it to them absent-mindedly. His fingers beat a tattoo on the chair arm, his eyes fixed themselves unseeingly on a last year's calendar that was the only ornament upon the wall above the fireplace.

"Cass, I'll give you my roan horse for that sorrel mule and fifty dollars to boot."

"I'd do that myself, Mr. Kelton, was I in your place," Cass grinned, "and pat myself on the back and say, 'Boy, you sure made a trade then.' "

Distinctly he heard the restless clatter of Dorinda's feet as she walked along the back hall toward her room on the ground floor. The old lady and Kate entered the room. There followed a brief period of argument, then Mrs. Kelton shooed Benjy and Kate off to bed. Old Micajah, twisting

one end of his walrus mustache, began to talk solemnly of the war in Europe, for this was 1915 and Sarajevo was less than a year back.

Dorinda came into the room. She had changed into a blue dress that accented her slim, youthful loveliness. At twenty-two, the horse trader thought, she was still young, a tender filly not yet halter broken. He smiled at her, but her eyes went past him. Quietly he placed a chair for her, then resumed his own seat.

"Somebody's eyes are mighty bright tonight," the old lady said. "Somebody must be coming."

Dorinda tossed her head, the old lady continued to smile slyly and the two boys regarded their sister frankly. Old man Kelton stared into the fireplace. The horse trader's fingers shook the merest fraction as he lighted a cigarette. Outside, in the road that wound up from the county highway, sounded a mighty chugging and rattling.

"Andrew," said Matt, "bought himself a Ford."

Afterwards fat Andrew Marcum and Dorinda sat together, in two straight chairs side by side against the wall. They might as well have been a pair of exhibits at the State Fair, Cass thought, and went further with his thoughts. "If it was me coming to see her, we'd not sit here in the same room with the old folks for them to stare at." Covertly, so as not to embarrass her, he studied the girl, listening for her low-pitched, musical voice making staid, proper replies to Andrew Marcum's staid, proper observations.

The old folks, Cass knew, hoped for a match here. After all Andrew Marcum was only forty, and he had the best farm in the valley, money in the bank, too, and a certain amount of political influence. These things were what the old folks saw, missing altogether his hanging jowls, his deep-set crafty little eyes, the sensuous fullness of his mouth. They wanted Dorinda in the first fine bloom of her youth to take this stolid, unimaginative man from down the valley. She'd be a somebody in the community then; she'd be Mrs. Andrew Marcum.

"Pig," Cass thought, looking at Marcum. "Just a damned pig at the feed trough gouging and shoving the rest of the litter out of the way. He never saw a sunset in his life, never heard a bobwhite whistling, never lay flat of his back and listened to the song of Banjo Creek."

Some man, he thought further—though it wouldn't be Andrew Marcum—could strike fire from that girl. It was there, all right; but it was banked by the Kelton reserve and her strict upbringing. She'd eventually become halter broken and bow to the old folks' wishes. They always did; he'd seen it happen a hundred times. She would in time, too, make Andrew Marcum a good wife, stolid and heavy with dignity. It was like a knife in his heart to think of Dorinda stolid and dignified.

"ANDREW," said old man Kelton, "it's high time the decent folks in this valley done something about them Wallabys up at the head waters of the crick. That girl—" he glanced apologetically at his wife and daughter—"is the talk of the county, the old man would steal lightning and reach for the thunder, and somebody told me the boys made whiskey."

"What would you say do?" Andrew inquired respectfully.

"Form a committee—say, you and me and half a dozen others—and go up there and have a talk. Tell 'em what's what."

"S'pose they showed fight?" Cass drawled.

"Then we'd fight 'em," Kelton snapped. "Run 'em out of the county. This valley's always been respectable and it's going to stay respectable as long as Micajah Kelton lives in it."

"That's the talk," Marcum said, and glanced distastefully at the horse trader. "Maybe it's not your idea, Cass, but here in the valley we set a lot of store by right living and—and respectability. You," he added, without bothering to suppress his scorn, "don't care one way or the other."

"I believe in living and letting live," Cass said equably.

His eyes, half closed, watched Dorinda and he saw her flash in his direction a half-startled little glance. Then her eyes dropped, but not before he had surprised in them a certain reluctant approval. And now, as she looked at Marcum, Cass saw a shadow creep into those eyes, vague and indistinct but definitely a shadow. Watching the play of firelight in her dark hair, he spoke next upon an entirely different theme.

"Know what? Little Patsy Dover went and married that old groundhog Buck Adams—and him forty-five if he's a day."

"I guess that's their business."

"To be sure," the horse trader agreed. "But, Lord have mercy, when she's thirty-three he'll be sixty—kinda old to take her to dances and parties and suchlike. Golly!" He shook his head sadly. "Never could understand a young, good-looking gal hitching up to a man old enough to be—"

"She'll not have time," Micajah broke in, "for dances and parties if she's a good housewife."

"That's right," Cass agreed. "She'll be too busy taking care of Buck's rheumatism. We-ell, so it goes." He rose languidly. "Think I'll take me a little walk. . . ."

When he returned from the feedroom and the quart of wine, his eyes were sparkling and there was something akin to impudence in his expression. "Folks, let's have a little game of setback or seven-up. I got a deck of cards in my saddle bags."

There came a shocked gasp from Mrs. Kelton. Dorinda caught her breath. The boys, not meeting their father's eye, stared stolidly at the floor. In that sudden silence the sound of Micajah's clearing his throat resembled the blast of a ten-gauge duck gun.

"There ain't never been a playing card in this house, Cass, and there never will be."

"Nor in mine," Marcum said. "They talk about innocent card games. There's no such thing."

"Guess I'm just a black sheep," Cass smiled, "else I wouldn't be a horse trader. But I get a lot of fun out of life." He was looking at Dorinda, holding her eyes with his. "Nights like this, with a big old silver moon riding high, I sometimes don't go to bed a-tall. Just roam around in the dark sort of singing to myself. Darned if I don't do that now." He rose abruptly. "Mat, don't you and Drury think anything of it if I don't come in till way along towards daylight. I'll be out baying the moon like a hound."

Walking with a conscious swagger, his shoulders thrown back, his steps buoyant and elastic, he crossed the room and went out by way of the front door. A little later those in the room heard him singing a wild, high-beating song that none of them had ever heard before. Micajah shrugged.

"He's a peculiar fellow. Never heard him talk that much before in all the time I've known him."

CASS waited motionless in the shadow of the barn until the last rumble of Andrew Marcum's departing Ford had died in the distance. Then on swift, sure feet he negotiated the way to the back of the house. A light flared in Dorinda's room. He tapped the screen and heard her startled gasp.

"If you don't get away from that window, Mr. Franklin, I'll call Pa. I'll—"

"Child," Cass whispered, "I wouldn't hurt you for a farm in Georgia. Blow out that lamp and come over here. I want to talk to you. You deserve something after sitting next to Pig Marcum for half the night."

"Mr. Franklin!"

"Well, he is a pig, ain't he? He just ain't got a curly tail."

"Mr. Franklin!"

"Blow that lamp out, girl, and come here. You holler again like that and the old man will be out here with a shotgun and you'll have the death of one horse trader on your hands. Please, Dorinda, blow out that lamp."

In the darkness he heard her feeling her

way across the room. He caught the faint, sweet scent of her hair and felt his blood rise. Gradually, thanks to the moonlight, her face swam into view, a lovely face made even lovelier by apprehension. At that moment he was reckless enough to dare anything.

"You've got to go. You can't stand there."

"Dorinda, there's a dance at Eastern Cross. Come out through that window. You can ride my sorrel mare and I'll catch up that bay I brought in tonight. Quick, girl, while you're still young."

"Are you crazy? Pa would—"

"What Pa don't know never will hurt him. We can slip back in before daylight. You—girl, you aren't afraid of me, are you?"

"No."

"Say it then. Say, 'I am not afraid of you.'"

"I am not afraid of you—Cass. But, oh Cass, Pa would kill us both if he found out. You know how he is."

"I know how I am, too. I thought I knew how you were. But I guess I was mistaken. Well, if you prefer sitting against the wall with Pig Marcum— You and Patsy Dover! What do you want for a wedding present? Foot warmers for old Andy's feet?"

She struck at him, but the screen stopped her blow.

"Nice old Andy," Cass continued. "Growing old together—and, girl, you sure will grow old and in a hurry with him. Lord, you'll be respectable. Bet you won't even take off your stockings in his presence."

"Cass Franklin!"

"Well, goodbye, Dorinda. There's sweet music down at Eastern Cross and there's a white moon to light the way. And you're never young again."

"Cass! They—they'd be sure to find out."

"Maybe they would. G'by, Dorinda."

"Cass! I couldn't ride a horse in this dress."

With a suddenness that caught her unawares, Cass hoisted the screen, seized her round the waist and swung her through the window. Her startled breath fanned his cheek. He laughed, a low spontaneous laugh that carried no more than ten feet.

"That's easy fixed. I got a riding skirt in my saddle bags."

"Put me down. Put me *down!* What are you doing with a woman's skirt in your saddle bags?"

In his arms she was no more than a feather. He did not put her down. He ran lightly to the barn and set her on her feet at the feedroom door. A moment later he brought forth the skirt.

"You can change into this while I'm saddling the horses. Then you can change back at the dance."

DORINDA mounted the sorrel mare without his assistance. With Cass leading, they rode softly down the farm road. Glancing back, he saw the shivery fear in her eyes and sent her a buoyant look calculated to spur up her courage. Presently they reached the county highway and urged the horses into a trot.

"I'm scared, Cass."

"There's a lot of fun in being scared."

"You're a man. You can take care of yourself. Why even if Pa found out you —you could probably take care of yourself."

"I hope I could," Cass said fervently. "But listen, Dorinda. Years after this you'll be glad of tonight." He paused momentarily, then added in a rolling drawl: "Years after this—when you and Andrew—"

"I never said I was going to marry him."

"You never said you weren't, either."

"He's a fine man."

"He's a pig."

"I don't think you're much of a gentleman, Mr. Franklin. I always heard that no gentleman talked behind another gentleman's back."

His smile was guileless. "That's correct, Miss Kelton."

"But you said—"

"I wasn't referring to a gentleman when I mentioned Mr. Marcum."

"Oh, I could kill you."

"And maybe you could love me . . . Well, well, here we are quarreling again."

"You never answered my question about how you happened to have a woman's riding skirt in your saddle bags. I'll bet it's Callie Fox's."

"It could be," the horse trader admitted. "Or it could be a skirt I carry with me all the time so when I'm trying to sell a riding horse to a lady and she hasn't got a skirt of her own— Then again it could be something I bought with this very night in mind."

"I don't believe you. Miss Libby Wrenn says you're a dangerous man. She says if she had a daughter she wouldn't even think of letting her go out with you."

"Maybe that's why she ain't got a daughter."

"What?"

"I just meant that when she was a girl I reckon she was so prim and prissy and stand-offish that any prospective husbands that came along just naturally got scared off the premises."

They were silent for several minutes while the horses clop-clopped down the red-clay road. Cass kept stealing glances at the girl. She was still frightened and this irritated him.

"You're twenty-two years old," he declared half roughly. "I reckon you can go to a dance if you want to."

"But we sneaked out. Anyway, Pa says that as long as we're under his roof, he don't care how old we are, we got to do like he says."

"Your daddy," Cass said, "is a good man, but he's narrow gauge."

"It's folks like you—and Callie Fox," Dorinda said, with sudden vehemence, "that have all the fun."

"I'm trying to give you some fun tonight."

She did not heed his statement. "You can come and go as you please. You can go to all the dances. But I've got to sneak out—like that Wallaby girl. It's not fair! I reckon you'll tell it all over the county how you stole Micajah Kelton's girl out and—"

"You know that's a lie," Cass interrupted.

"I know that I don't know why I came with you."

"You came because you're still young and the spirit in you hasn't all withered and dried up yet. It's the best reason I know." He slapped the neck of his horse. "Well, down yonder lies Eastern Cross. I can see the lights and I can hear the music. Let's ride."

They broke into a gallop, thundering down a long hill into the town. Cass tied the horses, handed Dorinda the bundle in which was wrapped the blue dress, and led her through the doorway.

"Mrs. Gamble, you know Miss Kelton, don't you? She'd like for you to show her to the dressing room so she can change into her party dress."

HE WAITED near the doorway. Couples glided past. Greetings were flung at him. He smiled, but all the time his eyes were fixed intently on the door through which Dorinda would soon return. When she finally appeared, the rosy flush of forbidden adventure on her cheeks, he swung her away to the strains of a waltz.

When the music stopped, half a dozen young men crowded round begging for the next dance. Cass smiled down at her before surrendering her to Sam Barringer. Standing aside, he watched her through the next half dozen dances. In the vernacular, she was getting a rush. He brought up other men and introduced them, for Cass Franklin was known as a man who always saw to it that his girl had a good time.

Callie Fox came up to Dorinda and said: "Honey, it took old Cass to get you into circulation, didn't it?"

Cass was proud of the way Dorinda tossed her head. No apprehension shivered in her eyes now. She was laughing and she actually gave him a smile. No matter how it turned out, he would always be glad of this night. Just to see the sparkle in

her eyes made him, for the moment, completely happy.

She had caught a dazzling glimpse of a new life and her eyes glowed with pleasure at the discovery. As she danced away with young Barringer, Cass heard the silver tinkle of her laugh and thought that it would never cease ringing in his heart. To a certain degree now he could understand her former resentment of him. She had wanted nights like this and been denied them, while it was common knowledge all over the county that the horse trader never missed a dance or a party. She had been jealous and resentful of him as a symbol of the gaiety she had yearned for secretly.

THE dance ended at two o'clock. Dorinda disappeared, to return presently clad again in the riding skirt. Cass, who would take her home, was the recipient of many an envious glance from the other young men. The girls were calling to Dorinda that there would be another dance the following week. Cass led her out to the horses, helped her mount.

"Have a good time, Dorinda?"

"Yes!" she breathed.

Cass mounted. They rode down the silent street and out of the town. Ahead of them the moon laid a white path down the road. A white moon, he had told her, to light the way. He smiled. It was so good to be young and full of spirit, to take advantage of your youth and ride it with a free rein. You'd never be old as long as the blood ran so racily through your veins. Certainly Cass Franklin would never be old.

"Cass, do you think it's really wrong to dance?"

"Of course not," he answered gently. "Just a notion of the old folks."

"I shouldn't have come. I—"

"Please, Dorinda, don't be that way again. You're—"

She interrupted sharply: "Pa's going to find out. I know it," she added with simple, fatal finality.

"But listen—"

"Oh, you can ride away," she said savagely. "You can ride away laughing and singing. But I'll have this night thrown up to me all the rest of my life. Never hear the end of it."

"I won't ride away from *you* laughing and singing."

"You will, too. You'll ride straight to Callie Fox."

"Well," he snapped, his patience almost gone, "a man generally rides to another girl when he can't get the one he wants. I don't reckon you know that I have tried to make you love me tonight. But all I've done is freeze my fingers on a block of ice. I thought maybe I was the man who could make you wake up. Seems I was mistaken."

He reined in the bay abruptly, halted the sorrel with a sharp command and flung his right arm around the girl's waist, almost lifting her out of the saddle. For one instant his impatient lips held hers. Then he was sitting erect in the saddle, his cheek burning like fire.

"You sure can slap, Miss Kelton," he remarked formally. "I reckon my kissing will have to be done somewhere else."

"Yes! You—you took advantage of me. I hate you, Cass Franklin. I think I always have hated you, and now I know I always will."

"Miss Libby Wrenn told you I was dangerous," Cass said angrily. "But if you don't want to be kissed you ought not to be so damned pretty."

Dorinda was riding ahead, the sorrel going at a brisk trot. Cass urged the bay after her. When he came abreast of her, the girl saw his face revealed by the moonlight. It was a dark face, anger and bewilderment written upon it in equal proportions. Suddenly she began to sob. Once more Cass reached for her, but this time he suffered an interruption.

Around the bend in Andrew Marcum's Ford came old Micajah, his two sons, and Andrew himself.

Cass stared blankly at the twin muzzles of a double-barreled shotgun. But they were no more ominous than the chilly eyes

of old man Kelton. Beside him Dorinda had frozen. Marcum and the two boys followed Micajah out of the car. Looking at Marcum, Cass thought: "Well, they're doing it up in proper style. They even went and got the outraged suitor."

"Get down off them hosses, both of you." Cass and Dorinda dismounted. "Where you been?"

"We went to a dance in Eastern Cross. We didn't kill anybody," the horse trader grinned.

"Stealing my girl out in the middle of the night. I got a good notion to kill you, Franklin. I reckon it ain't occurred to you to think about her reputation."

"Her reputation was doing fine," Cass said, "the last time I observed it."

"We haven't done anything wrong!" the girl cried vehemently, her eyes fixed stormily on the old man. We just wanted to have some fun. Yes, we went to the dance. Is that a sin? I'm grown. I won't—Pa, take that shotgun out of Cass' face!"

"Hold your tongue," Micajah growled. "He's going to pay for this," he continued, all the case-hardened, unyielding righteousness of his soul rattling in his voice. "He'll soon find out—"

"I AIN'T so well informed," Cass broke in, "on the procedure in these cases. Does that shotgun mean— Am I supposed to marry the girl?"

"You can't do that," Dorinda said shrilly to Micajah. "I won't marry him. You can't make me."

"Drury," said Micajah, "bring me that blacksnake whip. Here, Matt, you hold the gun on him. Franklin, I'm going to beat you within an inch of your life."

"You ain't going to beat me a-tall," the horse trader said.

At the very instant the gun changed hands from Micajah to Matt, he gave a tigerish leap forward. His fingers closed like iron over stock and barrel. He wrenched the gun free and, springing backward, leveled it on the old man.

"You old fool," he said, "have you gone and lost your mind?"

The three Keltons and fat Andrew Marcum stared at him stupidly. The horse trader only half saw them. Something had come to life in his brain. Swiftly he chased the idea down.

"I reckon, though, you're right," he said, in a changed voice. "Don't know what I could have been thinking of. It'll be all over the county how she let a wandering horse trader steal her out at dead of night and take her to a wicked dance. I reckon she'll be a marked woman." He paused contemplatively and met Dorinda's flaming eyes. "Golly. What a fool a man can be sometimes. I don't know what in the world I could have been thinking of."

"You—you put down that gun," Marcum said.

Cass said: "G'by, Andrew. We don't need you right now."

He moved the gun significantly. Andrew, his face working, gave one piteous glance at old man Kelton, found no support there and stumbled into his car. Cass stood silent until the machine had been turned around and started rolling back along the way it had come.

"It ain't nothing to your credit," old Kelton said, "to scare Andrew. He's a good boy, but he ain't got any sand in his craw."

"Takes a lot of sand," the horse trader remarked charitably, "to outface a shotgun." Carelessly he waggled the gun and Kelton stepped back.

"This ain't over," Kelton promised. "You got the ups now, but there'll come another day. You got a gun, ain't you? Well, you better carry it from now on."

"Let's be reasonable," pleaded the horse trader. "You'd like to live a spell longer, and the Lord knows I would. I know I've done wrong and I admit it. Poor Dorinda. Well, there's only one honorable thing to do. Mr. Kelton, I'm willing to marry your daughter."

"It ain't a question of—" the old man began.

But he was cut short by Dorinda. She had swung violently back into the saddle. She leaned down now and for the second

time that night slapped Cass Franklin.

"I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth."

Cass paid no attention to this outburst. He shook his head sadly. "There's no other way, Mr. Kelton. A lot of folks saw us at the dance and knew how come we were there. Of course your daughter's one of those cold women. She thinks kissing is something you do only to babies. But it's time I settled down, and I reckon I could do worse. Well, let's make it tomorrow, early."

There came a furious gasp from Dorinda. Then the sorrel mare leaped forward as if shot from a gun. Cass stood still watching the flying figure in the moonlight. A faint smile creased his lips.

"Don't look so promising," he said. "But you notice she rode away on my horse. Stands to reason, if she'd been as mad at me as she let on, she'd not have touched anything of mine." Flinging the gun aside, he swung into the saddle. "Sorry Andrews run off and left you fellows to walk. But I can't help it. I got to run myself."

In a shower of dust he thundered up the road. He overtook Dorinda at the Kelton gate, which she had dismounted to open. Jumping recklessly to the ground, he seized her and laughed hard as she fought him.

"I tried and tried to make you love me and you wouldn't. So when I saw a chance to get you anyway I took it. Why, girl," he continued extravagantly, "think of that reputation. You've got to marry me."

"You—you said I was a cold woman."

"Am I acting now like I think that? Great time of day, girl, I love you. And when a man like me loves a woman he does something about it. He don't sit around in a parlor with the old folks and talk about the weather and people that ought to be run out of the county. He does *this*."

She came at last willingly into the horse trader's arms.

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

Going to Jerusalem was no game for Dan Harden; for beyond the Jaffa Gate he faced a peril greater than the Arab raiders' guns. That wild night ride across the desert carried him into a tainted land that brave men will not enter —the breeding spot of the plague. A swift, exciting short novel, by

FREDERICK C. PAINTON

THE DEVIL'S MUSHROOM

When he disappeared, in the early years of the War, he knew more secrets of the British Empire than any man alive. . . . And now he was a prisoner on a black Mediterranean rock, and Byng of Boston had to find him. A gripping tale of Europe's Man of Mystery, by

JAMES F. DWYER

KARPEN THE JEW

Out of the corridors of time he came—a weird figure from the ghostly past —bound on an errand of vengeance, to wipe out present wrongs and save the future of the world. A modern parable, by

ROBERT NEAL LEATH

COMING IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—SEPT. 3rd

Argonotes.

The Readers' Viewpoint

MEMO for a Sultry Monday Morning—to be played softly and to the accompaniment of a small bassoon. . . . Remember to take one set of overshoes home from office this eve . . . Speak to Miss Tillinghast about the use of the semicolon in dictated letters. Explain that it is not to be used recklessly or without due thought and never in such phrases as: quote, hoping that you will find this adjustment satisfactory; we are; yours very etc., etc., end quote . . . Get white shoes fixed. Ascertain what will remove grass stains from toes of same, besides sand-blasting . . . Do something about The Boy's birthday. Find out, if possible, if the Yankees are playing in town that day . . . Phone Mr. Thogneck and tell him that the revisions on his nineteen-part serial are, as you feared, Inadequate. Try to persuade him to take the manuscript to one of our competitors . . . Buy ¼ doz. pair socks . . . Tell cover artist green sunsets not pleasing to majority of readers . . . Sesp. gloom have not (That's what it looks like and we can't imagine what it could mean) . . . Get new man to edit new novel by Mr. X who writes marvelous stories but cannot spell, punctuate, or have sentences end up at the same place they started out for . . . Write to Joe and ask him to return watch you inadvertently left in icebox last night while making midnight sandwiches. Tell him it is old heirloom and that you will pay substantial reward for its recovery. Should be in, or near, the watercress . . . Do lead for Argonotes.

Well, we seem, by the unprincipled device of foisting the unpalatable minutiae of our daily existence on the helpless readers of this column, to have done the lead for Argonotes. So suppose we turn immediately to the mail and a letter from a reader who pats our head with one hand while letting a little blood with the other.

RUSSELL M. WOOD

I am not such an old-timer, as Argosy readers go. I first began reading Argosy about the time Ray Cummings' story, "The Girl in the Golden Atom", appeared in your pages. Readers who sigh for the good old days give me an acute pain. Sure, there were good stories in Argosy then. There always have been. There still are. Just as good, if not better.

But sweet-scented spirits of sulphur! How did Eric North's story, "Three Against the Stars" get by the editorial wastebasket? Oh, it's a fair story. Excellent possibilities in the conception of life from stardust. Characters fairly well done. Dull, but believable. With the exception of Dr. Montague. In the first place, he is a windbag, which few serious scientists (of my acquaintance, at least, and I've known several Ph. D's) are. In the second place, he is incredibly ignorant of even the most elementary astronomy. (Cf. Argosy, July 16, p. 82, lines 43-45) "He (Mars) is the smallest of all the planets, except Mercury, and like Venus he has no moon." With one fell swoop the Prof. sweeps Phobos and Diemos out of the Martian sky. And again. (Cf. Argosy, same issue, p. 82, lines 47-48) "On Mars water and land are about equally divided." What a relief to the poor Martians who have been going thirsty for countless ages, thinking that Mars was an arid wasteland, for the most part! But that isn't all. Not content with doing the poor Martians out of their moons, he straightway lops off a half-dozen or so of Jupiter's satellites. (Cf. Argosy, same issue, same page, lines 57-59) "If there are Jovians—which is unlikely—they do their courting in the light of five moons." Goodness gracious, Professor! Back to the schoolroom for you!

Not content with making the poor savant a benighted windbag, Mr. North even robs him

OLD BOOKS WANTED

We pay big cash prices for thousands of different titles. We bought over 7,500 books in past twenty-one months, paying as high as $500 for a single book. For example, we will pay you cash for the following books as described in our price list:

Pilgrim's Progress	$4,000.00
Adventures of Tom Sawyer	200.00
Old Swimmin' Hole	75.00
Black Beauty	100.00
Treasure Island	50.00
Scarlet Letter	35.00
Venus and Adonis	5,000.00
Leaves of Grass	250.00
Snow-Bound	45.00
Uncle Tom's Cabin	100.00
Ben Hur	50.00
Last of the Mohicans	50.00
Moby Dick	100.00
Little Women	25.00
McGuffey Primer	100.00
Tamerlane & Other Poems	5,000.00

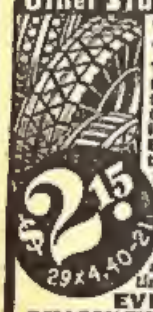
These are but a few of the many thousands of books we want. DON'T SEND BOOKS until you have checked our latest list giving full information. Don't delay—a single old school book, story book, bible, poetry, history, travel, almanacs, newspapers, letters, etc., may bring you $25, $50, $100, $500 or even $5,000 cash for certain books. Better investigate NOW. Send 10c to the American Book Mart, 140 S. Dearborn St., Dept. 425, Chicago, and we will send you latest list of old books we want to buy and cash prices we will pay.

GUARANTEED TIRES!

GOODYEAR·GOODRICH
FIRESTONE·U.S. and
Other Standard Makes

FREE! LANTERN
With Every 2 Tires ordered

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.



World's Lowest TIRE PRICES

Tire users by the thousands all over the U.S.A. vouch for the Long Hard Service of our Standard Brand tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire experts. Our 21 years experience makes it possible to offer tires at lowest prices, with legal agreement to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give 12 Mos. Service.

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.09
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
32x5.00-19	2.80	1.35
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
6.25-17	2.90	1.35
29x4.25-19	2.00	1.85
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.45
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.25	1.40
32x6.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x6.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.50-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.45
31x6.00-18	3.60	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.35
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.25
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES
(High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
32x6	2.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	2.25
33x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	6.45

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x5	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.85
33x5	3.75	1.75
36x5	3.95	1.75

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.00
38x7	10.98	4.65
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$3.75	$1.65
8.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.85
9.00-20	10.95	6.65
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

ALL OTHER SIZES

DEALERS WANTED

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 3201-A, Chicago, Ill.

of adult intelligence. With childish fatuity, the great scientist remarks: (Cf. ARGOSY, same issue, same page, lines 21-23, 30-34) "Venus is known as Hesperus, the star of the evening. Her influences, *astrologically* considered, are for human good. If light denotes goodness, as we believe, then we may expect the inhabitants of so magnificent an orb as Venus to be angels of light, indeed." Prittle-prattle, Professor! The whole story reeks of the same sweet savor. Out here around Hollywood we have a word for it: "Stinko."

As I said in the beginning, I like ARGOSY, always have, and always will, as long as it holds to its past and present standard of excellence. Never before have I found anything in it that didn't suit me 99.44%, though the "Semi-Dual" stories of several years ago were faintly lousy. But goodness gracious grandma, Mr. Editor, please don't give us any more like Eric North's "Three Against the Stars!" Whew!

Wilmington, California

WE WERE afraid, when first we saw the North manuscript, that sooner or later we were going to have trouble with astronomy . . . But if Mr. Wood, or anyone else for that matter, thinks he, or they, is, or are, going to involve us into a discussion of the facts of planet life (we seem to be having enough confusion with grammar), he, she, it or they is or are going to have to change his, her, or their mind, or minds, about it right away. Anyone who wants to untangle *that* sentence is, furthermore, most welcome to do so.

OMNISCIENCE DEPT. Concurrently with the last installment of "The Man with the Magic Face," appeared an item in the daily papers to the effect that Germany's new bombing planes have been equipped with a device capable of transmitting death-rays on ultra-short radio waves. Ho-hum. If it's going to happen, you'll probably see it in ARGOSY first.

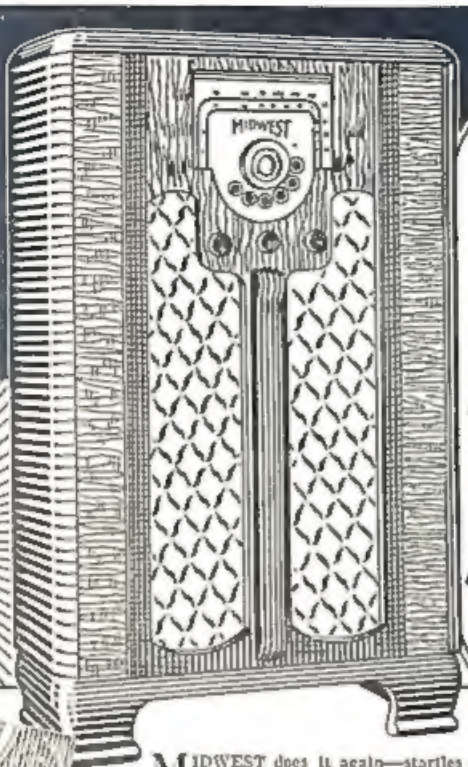
BECOME AN EXPERT

ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn $2,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. Only 10,000 Certified Public Accountants in the U.S. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C.P.A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C.P.A.'s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays."

LASALLE EXTENSION, Dept. 858-H, Chicago
The School That Has In Its Alumni Over 1,450 C.P.A.'s

MY FACTORY-TO-YOU PLAN SAVES YOU UP TO 50%



also $30.00 AND UP FOR YOUR OLD RADIO AS A SPECIAL TRADE-IN ALLOWANCE!

17-TUBE WORLD-WIDE MIDWEST

30 DAYS FREE TRIAL

MIDWEST does it again—startles the radio world with its new and sensational packed-with-feature radios—amazes merchandising men with its 50%-lower-than-retail factory prices. Send for the new 1939 catalog and feast your eyes on its many history-making values. For example, you can own this super-sensitive, 17-vital tube, world-wide Midwest for the cost of an ordinary 10-tube radio. Use it for 30 days FREE before you make up your mind. If you decide to keep it, you secure $30.00 credit on your old set. Even higher trade-in allowances on other Midwest models!

This 1939 Midwest will delight you with its tremendous range (550 KC to 18,000 KC), glorious new tone and brilliant world-wide reception. Stations 10,000 miles away come in like "locals". Just imagine a radio so big, so fine, so powerful, so luxurious . . . in a big, beautiful, richly-finished walnut console . . . at such an amazingly low factory-to-you price.

Let us tell you about our complete 1939 line with many features like Dial-A-Band Tuning, Electric Touch-Button Split-Second Tuning, Acousti-Filter, Fidel-A-Trol, Tun-A-Lite Indicator, and scores of other features.

MIDWEST FACTORY-TO-YOU PRICE... $69.95
TRADE-IN ALLOWANCE... $30.00
YOU PAY ONLY
$39.95
ABSOLUTELY COMPLETE

AMAZING NEW EASY-PAY PLAN

Factory-To-You Wholesale Price Saves You 50%

The famous Midwest factory-to-you plan, proven by 19 years of success is just as exciting! You buy at wholesale prices, just like a dealer.

Marvel At Tone!

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS—"The Midwest tone quality is the best we heard of the four makes we had demonstrated. All domestic stations, and foreign stations, such as Berlin, Paris, London and South America, are very clear." George Seidelman.

Finest Radio At Any Price!

DETROIT, MICHIGAN—"We were surprised at the clear reception of all domestic and foreign stations. Our new Midwest is the finest radio we have ever owned at any price. Our friends remark about its beautiful range of tone and clearness of reception." Mrs. B. Costantini.

SEND FOR FREE 1939 FACTORY CATALOG

You save up to 50%, and make your radio dollar go twice as far when you order direct from the Midwest Factory! Remember, you get 30 days' FREE Trial. Midwest guarantees your absolute satisfaction. Write today for FREE 1939 catalog.

PASTE COUPON ON 1¢ POSTCARD... OR

MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION
Dept. 63-HH
CINCINNATI, O.

Send me your new FREE catalog, complete details of your liberal 30-day FREE trial offer, and factory-to-you wholesale prices.

WRITE TODAY!

Name .....

Address .....

Town ..... State .....

User-Agents make Easy Extra Money
Check ☐ here for details.

MIDWEST (Factory-to-You) RADIOS

DEPT 63-HH, MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION CINCINNATI, OHIO, U.S.A.

Manufacturers of Quality Radios Since 1920

ACT NOW!

ON THIS BARGAIN OFFER.

THE COMBINATION FOR AS LITTLE AS 10c A DAY

How easy it is to pay for this combination. Just imagine! Terms as low as 10c a day to get this combination at once. You will never miss 10c a day. Become immediately the possessor of this amazing combination. You assume no obligations by sending the coupon.

THIS BEAUTIFUL DESK FOR ONLY $1.00

WITH ANY

REMINGTON PORTABLE TYPEWRITER

A beautiful desk in a neutral blue-green fits into the decorations of any home—trimmed in black and silver—made of sturdy fibre board—now available for only one dollar ($1.00) to purchasers of a Remington Noiseless Portable Typewriter. The desk is so light that it can be moved anywhere without trouble. It will hold six hundred (600) pounds. This combination gives you a miniature office at home. Mail the coupon today.

THESE EXTRAS FOR YOU

LEARN TYPING FREE

To help you even further, you get free with this special offer a 19-page booklet, prepared by experts, to teach you quickly how to typewrite by the touch method. When you buy a Noiseless you get this free Remington Rand gift that increases the pleasure of using your Remington Noiseless Portable. Remember, the touch typing book is sent free while this offer holds.

SPECIAL CARRYING CASE

The Remington Noiseless Portable is light in weight, easily carried about. With this offer Remington supplies a sturdy, beautiful carrying case which rivals the most attractive luggage you can buy.

SPECIFICATIONS

ALL ESSENTIAL FEATURES of large standard office machines appear in the Noiseless Portable—standard 4-row keyboard; back spacer; margin stops and margin release; double shift key; two color ribbon and automatic reverse; variable line spacer; paper fingers; makes as many as seven carbons; takes paper 9.5" wide; writes lines 8.2" wide, black key cards and white letters, rubber cushioned feet.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

The Remington Noiseless Portable Typewriter is sold on a trial basis with a money back guarantee. If, after ten days trial, you do not wish to keep the typewriter, we will take it back, paying all shipping charges. You take no risk.

MAIL COUPON NOW!

Remington Rand Inc. Dept. 145-8
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Instruction Booklet for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....